ALL ABOUT HISTORY

NEW



Killing Lincoln

How John Wilkes Booth plotted to bring down an entire nation

THE LAST PHARAOH OF EGYPT

The story of Antony, Cleopatra and the end of Ancient Egypt

20 myths busted

+
Vikings
The Cuban Missile Crisis
Genghis Khan
Columbus
The other cold war

HITLER AT WAR

The expert verdict on the Führer's tactical prowess in World War II



Invasion of Saigon

An eyewitness account of South Vietnam's fall

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South Vietnamese citizens try to scale the walls of the American embassy in Saigon in a vain attempt to flee the advancing North Vietnamese troops. **Page 30**

Welcome to issue two

I would like to dedicate issue two to everyone who helped make the first issue of **All About History** such a massive success and, primarily, that's you – the people who bought and enjoyed it and came back with such positive feedback. A huge thank you also goes out to all those who subscribed too; we'll do our very best to ensure the standard remains as high in the future.

I've really enjoyed editing the magazine so far and this issue I most enjoyed editing the Your History section. We always wanted **All About History** to be the history magazine for everyone and the idea behind Your History was to provide a place where readers could share the diverse and often amazing stories passed down through the family.

So despite some fantastic articles including a first-hand account of the fall of Saigon, an expert's opinion on Hitler's tactical ability and a biography of Genghis Khan, I found myself most fascinated by the stories and accounts that came in from readers.

These include a tale of a WWII bombing raid from which a young man never returned, penpal letters between an English girl and a member of the Hitler Youth, and some shocking photos of a devastated Hiroshima just weeks after the Little Boy bomb was dropped. This amazing content can be enjoyed on page 94; it further strengthens our belief that history is created by everyone and should be enjoyed by everyone. Do get in touch and share your own stories with us.



Dave Harfield
Editor in Chief

Issue two highlights



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Hitler at war
We speak to the applied research scholar from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum to get an expert's view on the Führer's role in the major campaigns of World War II.



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20 history myths busted
Dispelling 20 lies perpetuated over the centuries, we shed some light on everything from what a thumbs-up meant for gladiators to who really said, 'Let them eat cake'.



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All About Your History
History is made by every single one of us, so please send your photos, stories and letters to **allabouthistory@imagine-publishing.co.uk** to share them with the world.

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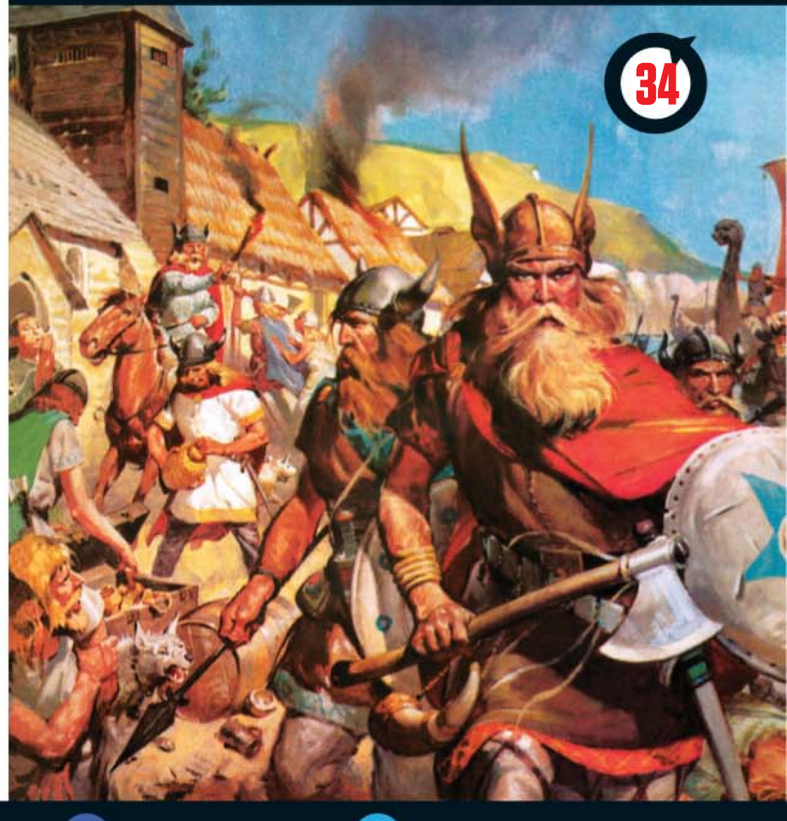
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Learn how John Wilkes Booth assassinated the American president

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We pit ten of the most successful civilisations of all time head to head

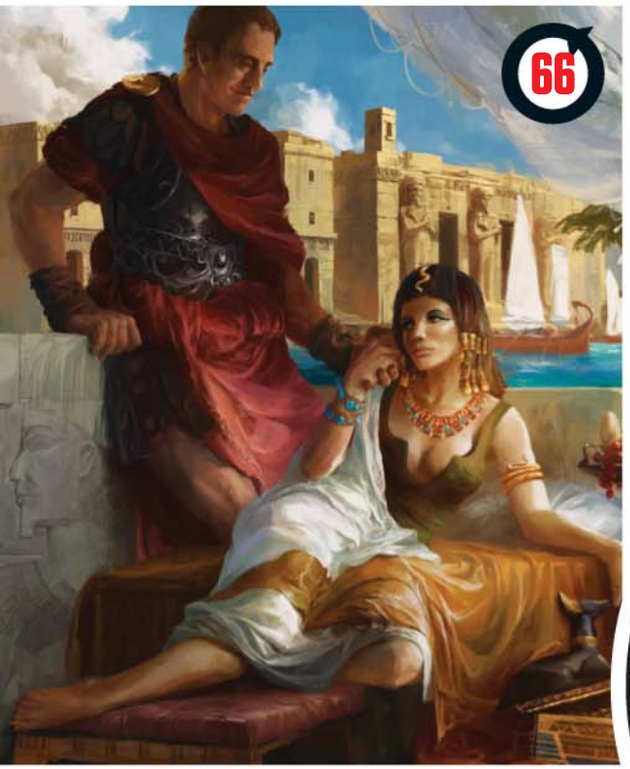
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They may have been allies in communism, but the USSR and China came close to all-out war





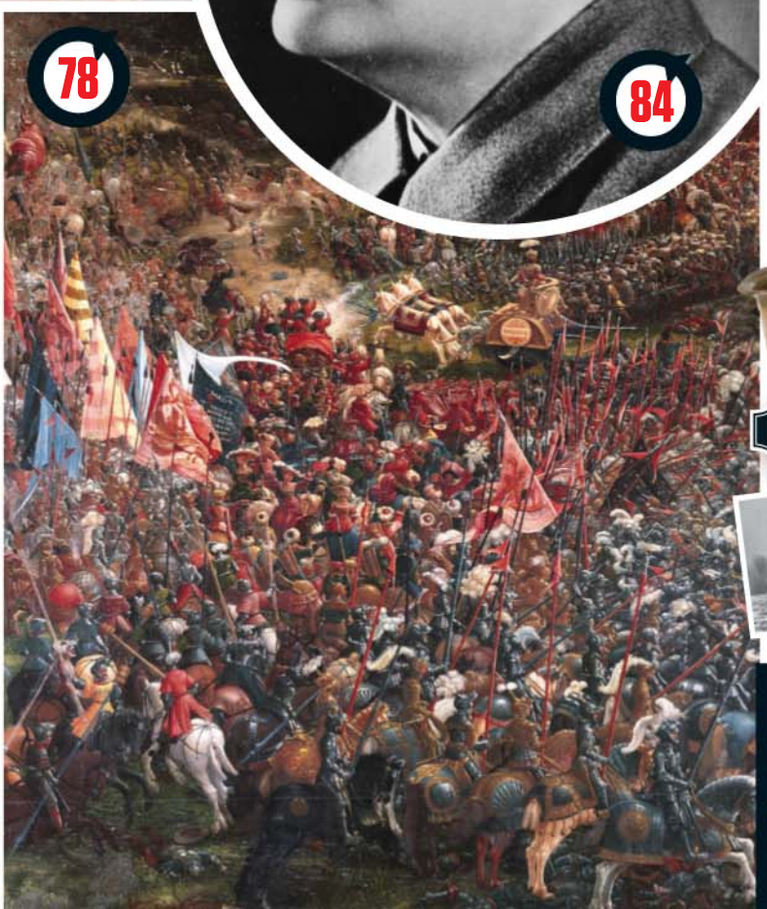


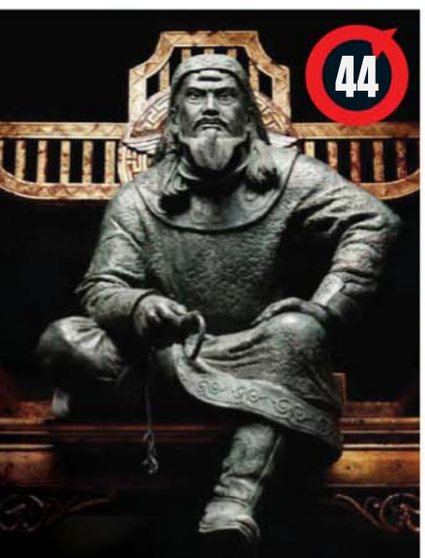












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This issue we highlight the historical flaws in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*





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DEFINING MOMENT

NELSON MANDELA RELEASED FROM PRISON

Nelson Mandela pictured with his wife, Winnie, moments after unconditional release from Victor Verster Prison where he'd been incarcerated for 27 years. He was then driven to Cape Town along a route lined by thousands of supporters.

11 February 1990

©Getty



DEFINING MOMENT

FIRE IN THE SKIES

A burst of flame flashed into the sky as the German passenger airship LZ 129 Hindenburg exploded during its attempt to dock with a mooring mast at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station, New Jersey, USA. There were 36 fatalities and it brought the short-lived age of airship travel to an end.

6 May 1937



© Getty


SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES



DEFINING MOMENT

TRIUMPH IN DEFEAT

A triumphant-looking 'V-for-victory' sign belies the fact this photo was taken as President Richard Nixon left the White House for the last time after his resignation for his part in the Watergate scandal. The discovery of the 'smoking gun' tape gave Nixon little choice but to resign before certain impeachment.

8 August 1974

© Getty



Amundsen

The first to navigate solo through the Northwest Passage in 1903-06



Erikson

Claimed to be the first European to land in America



Raleigh

Explored the New World and hunted for the lost city of El Dorado

CANADA

NLAND

Amundsen: 1903

Exploration

Take a tour through time

Meet the intrepid people who ventured forth into the unknown and discover how they redefined the world map, time and again

AFRIC

BRAZIL



Darwin

Formed his theory of evolution on a global expedition

South Atlantic Ocean

Cabral: 1500



Cabral

This Portuguese explorer was the first European to discover Brazil in 1500



Bingham

The first Westerner to visit Machu Picchu

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Some interesting trivia about one of the most well-known explorers of all time



© Steven Pavlov

Over 2,000 years of exploration


Marco Polo on the road to Carthay

Greenland settled

GREENLAND 982

When Scandinavian explorer Erik the Red discovered a large island in the Atlantic Ocean he established a colony before returning to Norway to proclaim its greatness, referring to it as 'the green land'. He went back to Greenland later with over 500 more men, women and domestic animals. This led to the permanent colonisation of the island that still exists today.


Erik the Red

MARCO POLO'S TRAVELS BEGIN

VENICE, ITALY 1260

Marco Polo's amazing voyage of discovery into the heart of Asia was truly a remarkable feat, especially considering the lack of fast or safe travel at the time. On his journey he reported having met the great Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan, who showed him his fabled summer residence, and went on to visit many major cities including Beijing, Chengdu and Hangzhou. The entire trip took Polo 24 years and, after returning to Venice, he found his city at war with Genoa. Polo recounted his explorations in *Il Milione* (often translated as *The Travels Of Marco Polo*). This travelogue was written down by Rustichello da Pisa, who was imprisoned for a spell with Polo in Italy. Due to the second-hand nature of the information, many of Polo's accounts of Asia have been questioned by modern historians, with some since proven inaccurate.

Exploration timeline

Indus charted
Ancient Greek explorer Scylax of Caryanda is sent by Persian King Darius I to chart the course of the Indus River.
515 BCE

Pytheas visits England
Greek explorer Pytheas voyages past Gibraltar and veers west off Brittany to visit Cornwall where he observes the trade in tin.
310 BCE

Ptolemy's Map
Greek astronomer and geographer Ptolemy creates a map of the ancient world that charts the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa along with the surrounding oceans.
150 BCE

Greenland discovered
982

Vikings reach the New World
Leif Erikson, son of Erik the Red, discovers the New World by landing in Newfoundland – which is now part of Canada.
1004-1005

Marco Polo departs Italy
1260

Columbus sets out
Famous Italian explorer Christopher Columbus sets off on his first voyage to the Americas, funded by the Spanish monarchy.
1492

Calicut reached
Vasco da Gama becomes the first person to sail from Europe to India, landing in Calicut (now Kozhikode).
20 May 1498

Transcontinental trip
Scottish explorer David Livingstone becomes the first Westerner to make a transcontinental journey across Africa.
1854-1856


David Livingstone

New Zealand mapped
British explorer James Cook undertakes a voyage that would see him chart New Zealand's entire coastline.
1768-1771

600 BCE | 400 BCE | 200 BCE | 0 | 200 | 400 | 600 | 800 | 1000 | 1100 | 1200 | 1300 | 1400 | 1500 | 1600 | 1700 | 1750 | 1800 | 1850 | 1900

Herodotus writes *Histories*
450-420 BCE


A fragment of Herodotus's *Histories*

A big steppe forward
Chinese explorer Zhang Qian explores the steppes of Central Asia.
130s BCE


Zhang Quian

Ibn explores no more
After travelling over 120,700 kilometres (75,000 miles) in exploration of much of the Islamic world, Moroccan adventurer Ibn Battuta dies.
1368

Brazil discovered
Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral lands in Brazil accidentally while on a voyage to India.
1500

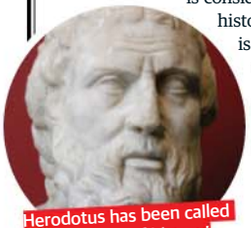
Source of the Nile
Henry Morton Stanley, a British explorer, confirms the source of the Nile as Lake Victoria.
1875


Henry Morton Stanley

Herodotus's travel guides

ANCIENT GREECE 450-420 BCE

Histories by Ancient Greek explorer-cum-historian Herodotus recounts the stories of many areas of the Mediterranean, eastern Asia and northern Africa, as recounted to him on his travels. *Histories* is considered the first-ever history book and Herodotus is held by some to be the 'father of history'; this is despite the fact that much of his text's accuracy has been called into question or disproved altogether.


Herodotus has been called the 'father of history'

Battuta sets off

MOROCCO EARLY-14TH CENTURY

Moroccan and Berber explorer Ibn Battuta became famous for his extensive travelling, with over 30 years' worth of adventures documented in his book *Rihla* (*Journey*). Battuta visited north and west Africa, eastern Europe, the Middle East, south Asia and much of China – a total distance that surpasses that achieved by Marco Polo threefold. Today, Battuta is considered one of the most-travelled people of all time.

Round the world

PORTUGAL 1519

The first circumnavigation of Earth was achieved between 1519 and 1522, led by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Despite Magellan taking five ships and a crew of over 270 men, only one vessel and four of the original crew returned – the rest killed by war or disease. Even Magellan didn't survive, being killed in the Battle of Mactan, Philippines, in 1521.


Ferdinand Magellan

A journey up the Nile

AFRICA 1875

By the 19th century the source of the River Nile had remained unknown for so long that it had become one of the most famous mysteries of the age, with many Western writers speculating on its point of origin. The enigma was finally cleared up by Welsh-born American adventurer Henry Morton Stanley in 1875, when he led an expedition up the Nile to Lake Victoria and confirmed this body of water as the starting point of the world's longest river.



HERNÁN CORTÉS CONQUERS THE AZTEC CIVILISATION

MEXICO 1521

One of the most well-travelled explorers in the Golden Age of Discovery was Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, who brought the Aztec Empire under Spanish control. The mission, beginning in 1518 and ending with the destruction of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán in 1521, led to the city being renamed Mexico City and the first wave of Spanish settlers moving in. While Cortés expanded the West's knowledge of the Americas considerably, mapping large parts of Central America, his actions today are the source of much controversy. His use of both force and political guile to conquer the Aztecs threw the region into an extended period of turmoil, leaving many natives homeless or dead. This was exacerbated by Cortés's own restless desire for constant exploration; indeed, after having conquered the Aztecs, he left on a two-year trip to Honduras before returning to Spain.



Journey to the bottom of the Mariana Trench

PACIFIC OCEAN 1960

While much of Earth's surface had been charted by the mid-20th century, few had ventured into its depths. That changed on 23 January 1960, when Jacques Piccard and Don Walsh piloted the Bathyscaphe Trieste to the bottom of the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench – the deepest known part of Earth. No other manned craft achieved the same feat until 2012, when American filmmaker James Cameron made the same trip in his submersible Deepsea Challenger.





Ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu



Tenzing and Hillary



Apollo 11 lands



Bathyscaphe Trieste



Earth's tallest peak Everest



Charles Lindbergh in front of the Spirit of St Louis

North Pole reached
Adventurers Robert Peary and Matthew Henson become the first to make it to the North Pole.
1909

Machu Picchu rediscovered
US explorer Hiram Bingham rediscovers the Quechua citadel of Machu Picchu.
1911

Northwest Passage conquered
Norwegian Roald Amundsen successfully traverses the Northwest Passage through the Arctic Ocean.
1903-1906

Ernest Shackleton dies
5 January 1922

Transatlantic flight
American aviator Charles Lindbergh makes his nonstop flight from America to France, a distance of 5,800 kilometres (3,600 miles).
20-21 May 1927

Everest beaten
New Zealander Edmund Hillary, along with Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, reach the summit of Mount Everest.
29 May 1953

Mariana Trench explored
23 January 1960

Moon landing
20 July 1969

Low Earth orbit
American astronaut Sally Ride becomes the first US woman to enter low Earth orbit.
18 June 1983

Human power
British explorer Jason Lewis sets off on a mission to circumnavigate Earth by human power alone.
July 1994

Fiennes conquers Everest
Aged 65, adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes climbs the world's highest mountain, after two failed attempts.
2009

Trip up the Amazon
Ex-British soldier Ed Stafford walks the length of the Amazon River, a feat never done before.
2010

Shackleton dies

SOUTH GEORGIA 1922



Famous explorer Ernest Shackleton undertook his last expedition in 1921. Leaving London on 24 September, the trip – described as an 'oceanographic and sub-Antarctic' exploration – visited Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where Shackleton suffered a heart attack. Ignoring calls to receive medical attention, he continued to South Georgia; unfortunately, Shackleton then suffered a second fatal heart attack.

First flight across the Atlantic

PARIS 1927

Charles Lindbergh made history on 21 May 1927 when he completed the first-ever, nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean from New York City to Paris, France. The feat won him instant international fame and, in the USA, he was awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor – the highest rank of military decoration.



At North Island, Rockwell Field, with Charles Lindbergh about to pilot the Spirit of St Louis

Armstrong lands on the Moon

SEA OF TRANQUILLITY 1969

While Neil Armstrong technically only explored a small part of one destination, the fact it was the Moon quickly cemented his reputation as one of the greatest explorers of all time. Over six days Armstrong and his colleague Buzz Aldrin spent just over two and a half hours exploring the lunar surface, taking photographs and conducting scientific experiments.

© Pavel Novak; Marie-Lan Nguyen; Getty; Alamy; Dirk Pons

Hall of fame

10 ICONIC EXPLORERS

Whether by land, sea or air, exploring has aided our understanding of the world. Let's follow in some adventurers' intrepid footsteps...

MARCO POLO

ITALIAN 1254-1324

At 17 years old, Marco Polo accompanied his father and uncle on their second trip to Asia, unaware he would spend a third of his life travelling. Residing in the land of Mongol ruler of China, Kublai Khan, Polo was sent on diplomatic missions around China. His closeness to Khan's daughter resulted in him escorting her to Persia via several South-east Asian countries before returning to Venice. Polo's adventures encouraged interest in China and likely inspired Columbus.

Leif Erikson

ICELANDIC 970-1020

Whether or not Leif Erikson was the first European to land in North America, he got there 500 years before Columbus. When King Olaf I of Norway sent him as a Christian missionary to Greenland, it's believed Erikson was blown off course and discovered part of North America, which he named Vinland. Whether accidental or a deliberate detour based on another explorer's tale, Erikson went on to establish a small settlement in Vinland (ie Newfoundland, Canada).



Was a Norseman the first to set foot in America?

IBN BATTUTA

MOROCCAN 1304-1377



Covering over 112,650 kilometres (70,000 miles) and visiting more than 40 modern countries, Moroccan Muslim scholar Ibn Battuta is one of the most-travelled people of all time. Spending approximately 30 years of his life travelling extensively around the Islamic world, as he set out on a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca, his adventures led him through non-Muslim lands too. Ibn Battuta encountered near-death experiences from bandits to sinking ships, but thankfully lived long enough to tell his tales.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

ITALIAN 1451-1506

Christopher Columbus did not 'discover' America. Unbeknown to him, natives had lived there for centuries – and been recorded by other Europeans. In fact, he stumbled across the continent rather accidentally while taking what he thought was a shortcut from Europe to Asia. Despite others landing there first, Columbus did make Europeans more aware of this New World, leading to increased contact, colonisation and the development of the modern Western world.



Francis Drake
ENGLISH 1540-1596

On becoming a ship's captain in his twenties, Francis Drake was on his way to fulfilling his dream of finding an undiscovered land in the Pacific. Drake's travels took him to the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico before finally embarking on a secret expedition for Elizabeth I to the western coast of North America. At sea for almost three years, his circumnavigation helped identify the true geography of our planet.

ESTEVANICO
MOROCCAN 1500-1539

Muslim slave Estevanico was sold to a Spanish nobleman and taken on the Narváez expedition in 1527. Estevanico consequently ended up travelling for almost an entire decade, exploring North America and experiencing the challenges that accompanied such expeditions. Estevanico was likely the first African to visit the continent, and was one of only a few survivors on this trip, returning as a guide some years later.



A Muslim slave, Estevanico travelled for an entire decade

Ferdinand Magellan
PORTUGUESE 1480-1521



Ferdinand Magellan had a dream: to visit the Indonesian Maluku Islands. He set off with five ships and over 200 men, heading west via South America. Unaware how vast the Pacific was, they faced great challenges and many died. The remaining crew reached the islands, where Magellan was killed by natives, and only one ship made it back to Spain. Although Magellan died, he led the expedition, so is credited with the first round-the-world voyage.

SACAGAWEA
NATIVE AMERICAN 1788-1812

Born into the Shoshone tribe, Native American Sacagawea was kidnapped as a child, then 'acquired' by French-Canadian Toussaint Charbonneau, whom she married. When Lewis and Clark led the Corps of Discovery to their North Dakotan camp, they hired the pair as guides. Being female, Sacagawea was a symbol to other tribes that the group was peaceful and harmless, yet she played a fundamental role in helping to navigate, trade, translate and survive. Remarkably, the trip led them up the Missouri River to Sacagawea's homeland and family. A true explorer, though, she continued on the expedition, travelling approximately half of the 12,875-kilometre (8,000-mile) journey.



Sacagawea was one of the first documented female explorers

"This is one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind"
Neil Armstrong

NEIL ARMSTRONG
AMERICAN 1930-2012

For some, land exploration just isn't enough. After serving as a US Navy pilot in the Korean War and becoming a test pilot, Neil Armstrong joined NASA in 1962, later becoming the organisation's first civilian astronaut to fly in space in 1966. As if this great achievement wasn't enough, in 1969 he went on to become the first person to walk on the Moon during Apollo 11.

Roald Amundsen
NORWEGIAN 1872-1928



Trading a life as a doctor for one as a polar explorer was an easy decision for Roald Amundsen. His heart set on exploring the Arctic, Amundsen quit uni and began his adventures via land, sea and air, first sailing through the Northwest Passage. Beaten to the North Pole, Amundsen was determined to be the first to reach the South Pole, and he was. Subsequently crossing the Arctic by air, Amundsen became one of the greatest polar explorers of all time.

© Look and Learn; Corbis; Getty

Day in the life

SAILOR FOR COLUMBUS

A SEAMAN ON CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS'S FLAGSHIP VOYAGING TO THE NEW WORLD
ATLANTIC OCEAN, 1492

As a sailor heading towards the unknown Americas, there wouldn't have been any shortage of tasks, and the work would have been hard and, in many cases, perilous. They were exploring uncharted waters, and doing so in cramped conditions, with makeshift sleeping areas and bland provisions. The flagship of the expedition, the Santa Maria, ultimately didn't survive Columbus's first transatlantic voyage, as it ran aground off Haiti in December 1492 and was abandoned, but it nevertheless remains an emblem of the explorer's achievements and provides a fascinating case study into life aboard a 15th-century vessel.

1 BREAKFAST

Shortly before the first shift commenced, the crew would get up and eat breakfast. This was generally a cold meal, often consisting of salted fish, biscuits and some cheese (fresh food was usually eaten within the first week of the voyage, as it went stale quickly). Much of the food on the Santa Maria would have been pretty basic but healthy enough.



Salted fish was a staple on sea voyages because it kept for long periods

2 START OF SHIFT

The crew were divided into two watches, rotating every four hours. The first watch, known as the Cuartos, began at seven o'clock. Certain sailors were assigned specific roles: two men were posted on the bow and the round-top on the main mast; while another was charged with recording the compass direction and the ship's speed, as dictated by the Santa Maria's master or pilot.

3 SETTING THE SAILS

Part of the general duties for sailors on the first watch was to raise, lower and set the sails using the various lines, as well as carrying out general maintenance tasks on the relevant equipment as and when appropriate. It was common for them to sing as they went about their work in order to stick to a rhythm and keep up morale.

"The majority of the crew would have to make do with any open space they could find [to sleep]"



The Santa Maria battled a number of storms en route to the New World

CLEARING THE DECK

In order to ensure the smooth running of the ship, sailors were also tasked with making sure the walkways and decks were clear at all times. Any debris left over from bad weather or maintenance had to be cleaned away, and the decks and rails had to be scrubbed at regular intervals.

END OF FIRST WATCH

The first watch ended, allowing the second watch – the Guardias – to begin. In the subsequent four hours the Cuartos watch were given a chance to socialise. Some of the activities they participated in included singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. Fishing was popular too because fresh fish was considered a great delicacy.

DOG WATCH

The shift between 5pm and 7pm was divided into two 'dog watches', effectively allowing the crews to switch over. This was done so as to ensure that the crews weren't constantly working the same shifts, and most pointedly to avoid always having to work the midnight 'graveyard watch' – traditionally an unpopular shift for obvious reasons.

TIME FOR PRAYER

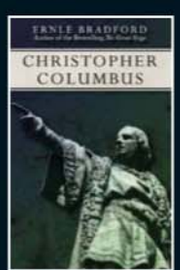
Every 30 minutes, the ship's boy would turn the glass (which was shaped like an hourglass). While doing this he would sing a prayer, which as well as letting the crew know the time also acknowledged the Roman Catholic beliefs of the majority of the personnel. Specific prayers would be sung at certain times of the day; at sunset, the prayer was the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen), for instance.

SLEEP

Having completed their second shift, the majority of the crew would attempt to get some shut-eye in the few hours until they started work again. While Columbus and some of the other officers had their own quarters, the majority of the crew would have to make do with any open space they could find. Below deck was where the supplies and privies were located, so that area was generally avoided.

How do we know this?

The Santa Maria's journal kept a detailed account of the journey, of which a number of extracts written by Columbus biographer Bartolomé de Las Casas have survived. These focus more on distance covered and notable discoveries, but they nonetheless provide a valuable insight into what this voyage of discovery entailed. Also useful through the course of research for this article was the book *Christopher Columbus* by Ernle Bradford (1973).



© Look and Learn

How to make... HARDTACK

LONG-LIFE BISCUIT FOR EXPLORERS
15TH TO 19TH CENTURIES

Ingredients
- 3 cups of flour
- 2 cups of water
- 2 teaspoons of salt

Voyagers have been creating biscuits that can be preserved since ancient times, but long-life rations really came into their own during the 15th century, when they were the primary foodstuff of explorers – although they often became contaminated with mould and insects! Hardtack remained popular until steam power superseded the age of sail.

METHOD

01 Preheat the oven to gas mark 5/190 degrees Celsius/375 degrees Fahrenheit. Prepare a flat baking tray or cookie sheet, but do not grease it. Next flour a chopping board or work surface.

02 Add the water and salt to a bowl and slowly sift in the flour, stirring with a palette or butter knife until the mixture thickens too much to stir.

03 Draw the dough together with your fingertips until it forms a rough ball shape. Turn out onto your floured surface and knead for five to ten minutes until the dough is firm but elastic.

04 Dust a rolling pin with flour and roll the dough out until it is around a centimetre thick. Give the dough a quarter-turn after every couple of rolls to keep the shape even and to prevent it from sticking to the surface.

05 Use a sharp knife or pizza cutter to trim the edges from your dough so it forms a square or rectangle. Divide the dough into smaller squares or rectangles; alternatively use a cookie cutter.

06 Using a cocktail stick or a skewer poke rows of evenly spaced holes into the dough.

07 Put the dough shapes onto your baking tray and cook for half an hour at gas mark 5/190 degrees Celsius/375 degrees Fahrenheit.

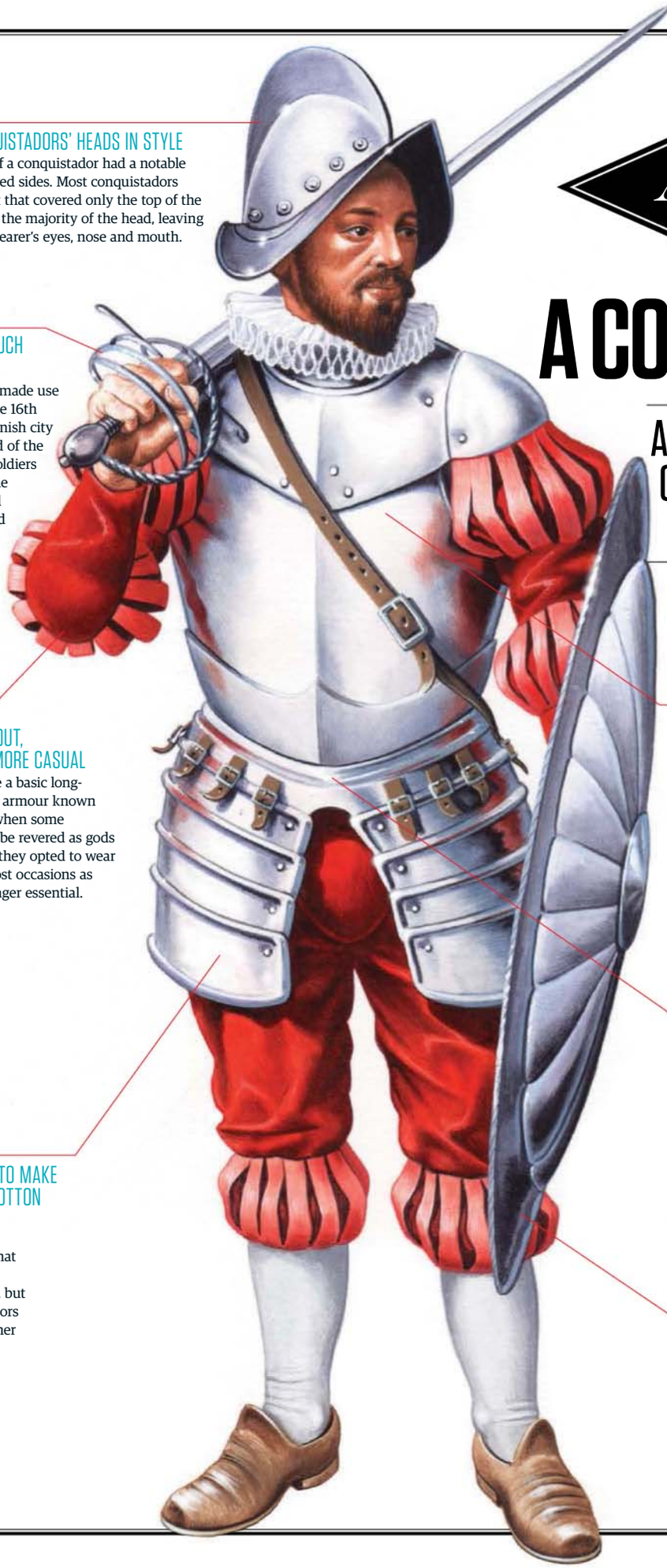
08 After 30 minutes, take the hardtack out from the oven, flip each cracker over and then bake for another half an hour.

09 Now remove from the oven and place on a wire rack, allowing the biscuits to cool completely before eating or storing them.

10 For less historically accurate (but better-tasting) hardtack, use soda water instead of ordinary water; it will make lighter, crisper crackers, but note this will also reduce their shelf life.

THE Anatomy of A CONQUISTADOR

A SOLDIER IN THE CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD, SPAIN, PORTUGAL 16TH CENTURY



HELMET

PROTECTING THE CONQUISTADORS' HEADS IN STYLE

The iconic steel helmet of a conquistador had a notable crest on the top and curved sides. Most conquistadors favoured a simple helmet that covered only the top of the head, but others encased the majority of the head, leaving just a small gap for the wearer's eyes, nose and mouth.

TOLEDO SWORD

SWORDS DIDN'T GET MUCH BETTER IN THE 1500S

Wealthier conquistadors made use of the finest swords of the 16th century. Made in the Spanish city of Toledo, the steel sword of the same name gave these soldiers a huge advantage over the natives of the New World thanks to its strength and resilience. Some cavalry would also carry lances.

CAMISA

AS FIGHTING PETERED OUT, CONQUISTADORS GOT MORE CASUAL

Most conquistadors wore a basic long-sleeved shirt under their armour known as a camisa. Over time, when some conquistadors started to be revered as gods and hostilities lessened, they opted to wear the lighter camisa on most occasions as metal armour was no longer essential.

CUERRA

POORER SOLDIERS HAD TO MAKE DO WITH LEATHER OR COTTON

For their arms and legs, richer conquistadors had overlapping steel plates that allowed movement while also providing protection, but lower-ranking conquistadors just wore a cotton or leather jacket known as a cuerra.

BREASTPLATE

STEEL SO STRONG IT MADE CONQUISTADORS ALMOST INVINCIBLE

Like their swords, the steel armour of conquistadors was made in Toledo. It left the soldier with very few vulnerabilities, and thus the primitive wooden weapons of the Aztecs and Incas were very ineffective. In fact, one conquistador could kill dozens of natives before losing his own life.

JACQUETA DE MALA

WEALTH DETERMINED HOW ELABORATE YOUR ARMOUR WAS

Conquistadors were not a uniform army. Rather, they were adventurers who sought a fortune in the New World of America. Thus, many had contrasting armour; while the wealthiest could afford steel plating, the rest relied on any metal available – often a sleeveless chainmail vest called a jacqueta de mala.

SHIELD

IF YOUR ENEMIES FIGHT WITH CLUBS, WOOD IS AS GOOD AS STEEL

Conquistador shields were mostly circular with a convex design in order to deflect blows. The strongest shields were made of metal, although – due to the nature of Aztec weapons – wooden shields were just as effective.

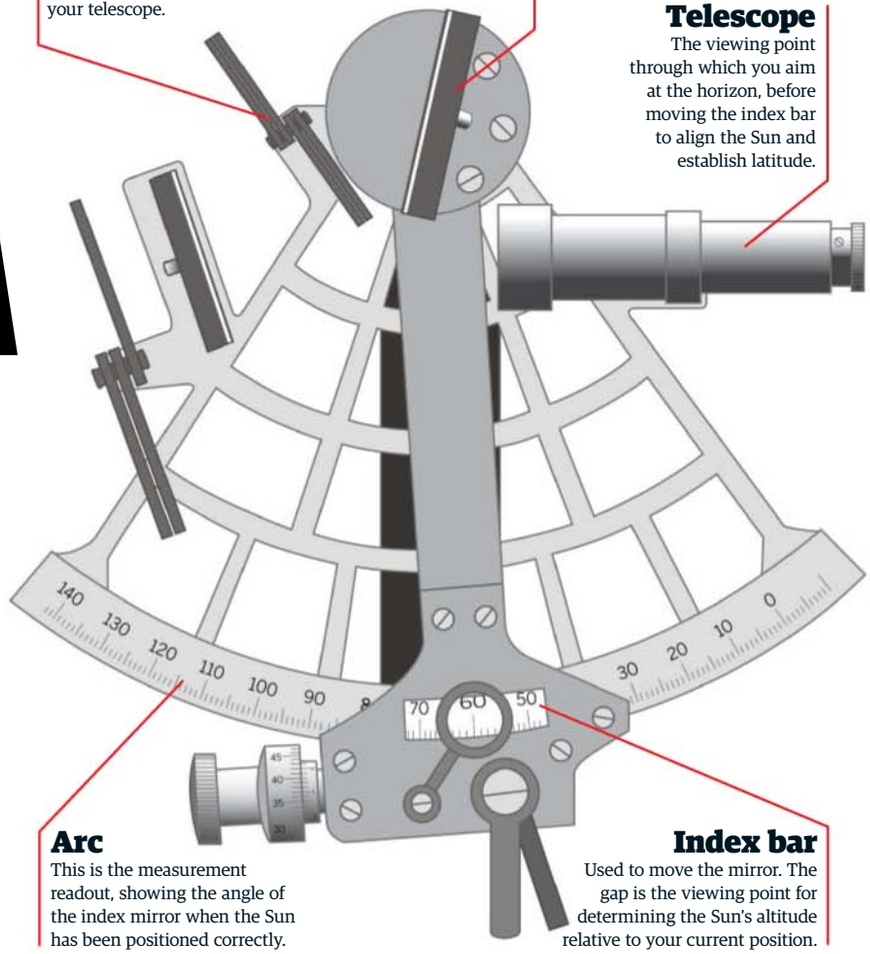
© Ian Jackson/The Art Agency

How to NAVIGATE WITHOUT A COMPASS

ANCIENT SEAFARING TECHNIQUES BEFORE THE 12TH CENTURY CE

First invented as a device for divining as early as the Chinese Han Dynasty (around 206 BCE), the compass was adopted for maritime navigation by the early-12th century CE. However, we know that many cultures were sailing well before this – so how exactly did they navigate Earth's vast oceans?

ANATOMY OF A SEXTANT



5 ANCIENT MARINERS

PYTHEAS OF MASSALIA
CIRCA 350-285 BCE

A Greek explorer who became the first person to describe the Midnight Sun in northern Europe.

NEARCHUS
CIRCA 360-300 BCE

Nearchus provided details for the book *Indica*, describing India after Alexander the Great's conquest.

EUDOXUS OF CYZICUS
130 BCE

A Greek navigator, he is the first recorded European to sail using the monsoon winds in Asia.

HANNO THE NAVIGATOR
500 BCE

Most famous for his exploration of the west African coast, he made it farther south than anyone before.

FLOKI VILGERDARSON
NINTH CENTURY CE

Credited with discovering Iceland, he used three ravens to help him find land – one of which led to Iceland.



01 Exploring by day

During daylight hours, you will be able to make out points of reference on land – such as mountains or large structures – as well as follow the path of the Sun itself. When possible, do as the ancient mariners would and stay within sight of the coast and use these landmarks to guide you. This also means you're never too far from terra firma for supplies.



02 Exploring by night

Once the Sun goes down and the coast is no longer visible – and given the general lack of visibility – moving closer to the land is not recommended due to the increased risk of running aground in shallow water and other dangers like reefs. Instead grab your star charts and look upwards to make use of the night sky.

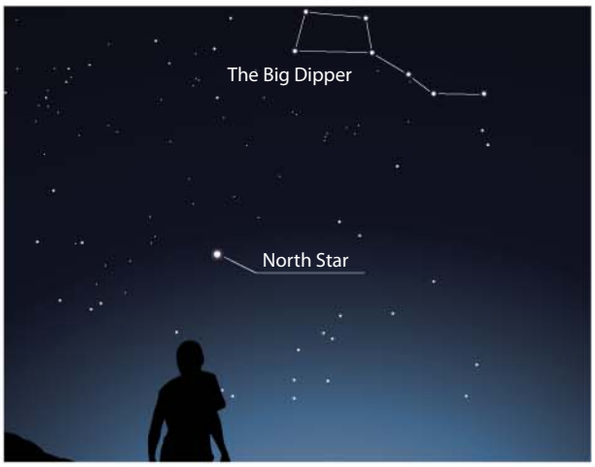
How not to navigate

Having found fame on his explorations in Asia for the Egyptian ruler, Ptolemy VIII, the Greek navigator Eudoxus of Cyzicus later became intrigued by the African coastline, when on the return journey of his second voyage to India, he was blown south of the Gulf of Aden.

On this detour he discovered the remains of a ship and, from its appearance and the details gathered from natives, Eudoxus concluded it had originated from Spain and had, albeit unsuccessfully, circumnavigated Africa.

This inspired him to attempt rounding the continent himself. Setting off from the same point in Spain (Gades, which is modern-day Cádiz), his first attempt proved too difficult due to weather and distance, and he was forced to turn back. On his second attempt, Eudoxus vanished and his fate has never been discovered, though it is generally assumed he and his crew foundered during the attempt to complete the ambitious journey.





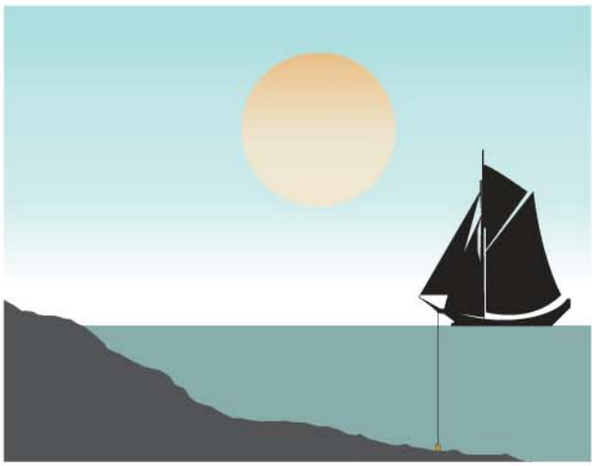
03 Find the North Star

The most common point of reference in the night sky for sailors has always been the North Star (Polaris), which sits directly above the Earth's North Pole. It's relatively easy to find given that it's one of the brightest stars in the sky. It can also be located by following down from the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) constellation which sits above it.



04 Other constellations

That is not to say the North Star is the only celestial body to guide you – there are many other stars that move little and don't 'set' that can serve as great guides when you're out at sea. For example, take advantage of constellations Cassiopeia and the Big Dipper – either side of the North Star – to more accurately gauge your heading.



05 Sound out your depth

Another good reference for navigators is the ocean's depth, as this will give you a good idea of how far you are from land. To establish how deep the water beneath you is, you need to drop a sounding weight into the sea, with its attached rope serving as measurement. As well as depth, these devices can also collect samples from the ocean floor.



06 Let birds lead the way

If for some reason you lose sight of the coastline during the day – and therefore have no stars to refer to – you can turn to the animal kingdom. A clever technique as a final resort is to release birds that are kept on board and then follow them as they fly towards land. This is something the Vikings did, using ravens to take them to new shores.

NAVIGATION TOOLS

THE ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM

1ST CENTURY BCE

Built with up to 30 gears, this ahead-of-its-time device worked like a modern clock to predict the location and alignment of stars.



JACOB'S STAFF

400 BCE

This device was used to measure angles – eg the angle between the horizon and the Sun – in order to establish a ship's latitude.



SUNSTONE

13TH CENTURY CE

Used by Viking navigators on cloudy days to determine the location of the Sun thanks to the way it polarised/refracted light.



USE THE MOON

N/A

If the Moon rises before the Sun sets it is trailing the Sun and so the bright side will point approximately west.



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THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF THE CHINESE TREASURE SHIPS

In the early-15th century, China expanded its influence and established itself as a world power with what went down in history as the 'seven voyages of the Chinese treasure ships'. From Java to Calcutta and even as far as eastern Africa, commander Zheng He forged new trade routes and brought back ships loaded with exotic goods and tributes.



GIANTS OF THE SEA

Compared with the vast majority of other sailing ships from the era, the Chinese treasure ships dwarfed them. Indeed, reports from the time indicate that some of these massive junks weighed over 2,000 tons and could accommodate up to 1,000 men.



BIG FLEET, BIG CREW

Commander Zheng He's treasure-hunting fleet is reported to have been 300 ships strong, with at least 62 of that number dedicated treasure ships. As the fleet travelled extensively, these vessels played host to navigators, sailors, doctors, manual labourers and soldiers, among other workers.

ROUTE ON THE YANGTZE

The majority of the fleet's awesome treasure ships were built in dockyards at the former capital Nanjing on the Yangtze River. From here they sailed downriver to the Yellow Sea (the northern part of the East China Sea) before joining the larger fleet. Records show that many were eventually deconstructed at Nanjing too.

GREATEST VOYAGES

SEVEN VOYAGES OF THE CHINESE TREASURE FLEET

CHINA 1405-1433

The first of seven daring maritime journeys for the Chinese Treasure Fleet got underway in 1405. From this first expedition to the fleet's final trip in 1431, these voyages – led by explorer Zheng He – would expand the influence of the Chinese empire throughout the world from Indonesia to Africa.

The fleet was commissioned in 1403 by Emperor Chengzu, who appointed the eunuch Zheng He as its leader. Zheng He was an imposing captain at 1.8 metres (six foot) tall who, after being taken prisoner at the age of ten, had gained the favour of the emperor with distinguished military service. As a trusted advisor, he was given the responsibility of charting a new trade route that would make overland journeys obsolete. The second major goal was to consolidate China's status as a formidable power in Arabia and eastern Africa.

Much as Zheng He's height made him an imposing figure, the ships he commanded made even more of an impression. The largest vessels measured roughly 71 metres (233 feet) – though some argue they were even longer at 137 metres (450 feet) – and carried a crew of several hundred.

The fleet would sail first to what is now Vietnam, then to Java, Malacca, Sumatra, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ceylon, Calcutta, and back to China. The maiden journey was not without difficulties, as Zheng He was forced to turn the fleet around at Ceylon when he realised they were not welcome. On the voyage home he battled with the feared pirate Chen Zuyi at Palembang in Indonesia. Zuyi would become part of the bountiful haul, and the ships also carried a number of foreign envoys from the lands they had visited.

The fleet set sail to return the envoys two years later. Upon getting back in 1409 he was dispatched directly to replicate the first two-year journey. They would have two years to rest before an even more demanding journey was planned for 1413.

For the fourth voyage the fleet would travel to the Arabian Peninsula and on to Africa. Stopping at Hormuz, Aden, Muscat, Mogadishu and Malindi, the fleet would bring home previously unheard-of treasures, including giraffes. The emperor commanded Zheng He to repeat the voyage twice more, with other stops pulled in along the way.

While the fleet was at sea, the emperor's war with the Mongols took him on the campaign trail where he died. For all the good that the fleet had done, Zheng He's journeys were very costly and it was decided by the new Hongxi Emperor that the voyages must stop. However, when his son came to power, one last epic expedition was organised.

By 1429 Zheng He was ailing in his old age. The seventh voyage in 1431 would take three years and dock in 17 ports; there is even reason to believe he beat later European ships to sailing around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. This journey would be Zheng He's last, as the commander died on the return journey and was laid to rest at sea. Under his leadership, the Treasure Fleet had not only plotted new trade routes but firmly established China as a maritime force to be reckoned with.

Types of ship

LEADER ZHENG HE
DESTINATION INDIA
MISSION TRADE



TREASURE SHIP

CREW: ~1,000

Perhaps measuring as much as 137m (450ft) long and 55m (180ft) wide, the treasure ships were designed to carry a lot of cargo and impress any who laid their eyes on them.
Strength Could transport a huge amount of freight and people
Weakness Not very manoeuvrable



MACHUAN

CREW: ~100

The machuan were approximately two-thirds the size of the larger treasure ships and were designed for carrying horses, repair equipment and additional tributes.
Strengths Could lead the fleet and conduct repairs
Weakness Unsuitable for battle



ZHANCHUAN

CREW: ~75

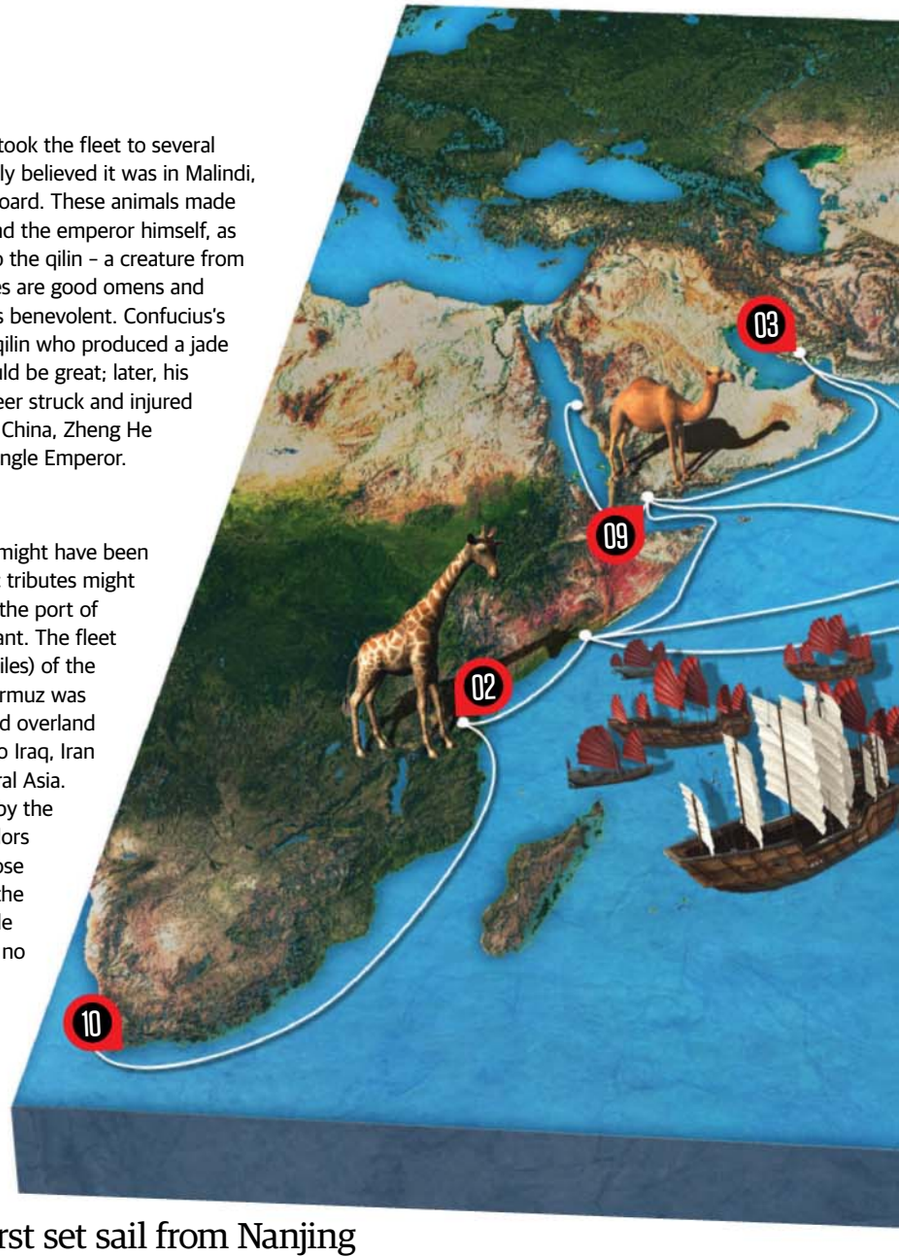
With smaller ships for rice and troops, the smallest were the nippy zhanchuan, which were designed for battle. These measured in at about 50m (165ft) long.
Strengths Highly manoeuvrable and could defend the fleet
Weakness Small capacity

01 Calcutta

Calcutta, India, was one of the biggest trading hubs in Asia at the time and was the final stop for Zheng He on the first voyage. This would have been a vital port, especially as they had just been forced to leave Ceylon. The dual mission purposes of profitable trade and establishing China as a force to be reckoned with would have really come to the fore here as Zheng He would have had something to prove. It is believed the treasure ships spent a good deal of time here before heading back to China laden with valuable goods and foreign ambassadors.

10 CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

Although it has not been verified for certain, the Venetian cartographer Frau Mauro reported that Zheng He and the Treasure Fleet actually rounded the Cape of Good Hope on their final voyage in 1433. If this is true, then the Chinese accomplished this years before any European ship would.



02 Malindi

Zheng He's later voyages took the fleet to several ports in east Africa, but it's generally believed it was in Malindi, Kenya, that they took giraffes on board. These animals made a huge impression on the sailors and the emperor himself, as they bore a striking resemblance to the qilin – a creature from Chinese mythology. These creatures are good omens and indicated that the current ruler was benevolent. Confucius's pregnant mother was visited by a qilin who produced a jade tablet telling her that her child would be great; later, his death was foretold when a charioteer struck and injured a qilin. By bringing giraffes back to China, Zheng He reaffirmed the popularity of the Yongle Emperor.

03 Hormuz

While the most profitable harbour might have been Calcutta, and while the most exotic tributes might have been found in eastern Africa, the port of Hormuz was still extremely important. The fleet crossed 2,250 kilometres (1,400 miles) of the Arabian Sea to reach it because Hormuz was the gateway to the Persian Gulf, and overland trading routes connected the city to Iraq, Iran and many other cities around Central Asia. The Treasure Fleet was welcomed by the merchants and traders, and the sailors noted the remarkable wealth of those who came to barter there. One of the biggest points of trade in the Middle East, the great and powerful made no secret of their status to their rivals.

04 NANJING

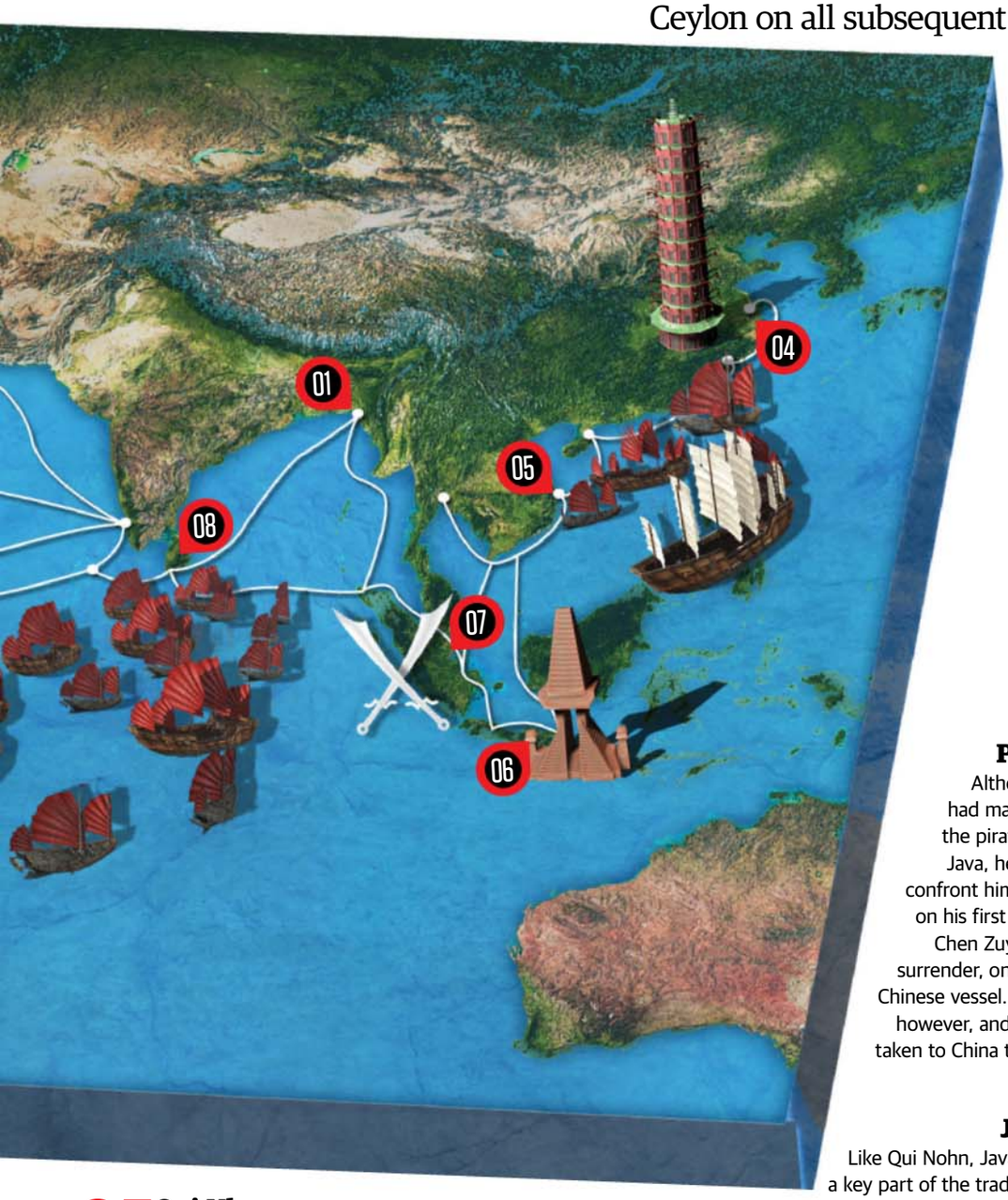
The Treasure Fleet first set sail from Nanjing on 11 July 1405 and would return two years later. At the time Nanjing was one of the largest cities on the planet and the Yongle Emperor was determined that the rest of the world should acknowledge China's status.

09 Aden

The ancient city of Aden in Yemen sits in the crater of a long-dormant volcano, and provided China with a much-needed military ally. The city was important because it was located on the trade route between Europe and India. In fact, it was so highly regarded by the Chinese that Emperor Chengzu sent two special envoys to accompany Zheng He on his first visit there.

08 CEYLON

Diplomacy failed when Zheng He first visited Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1405 and was turned away by the hostile General Alakeshwara. On the third voyage, however, Zheng He was prepared and beat the general. With Alakeshwara humiliated, the fleet stopped at Ceylon on all subsequent journeys.



07 Palembang

Although Zheng He had managed to avoid the pirate Chen Zuyi at Java, he was forced to confront him at Palembang on his first return journey. Chen Zuyi pretended to surrender, only to board the Chinese vessel. His plan failed, however, and the pirate was taken to China to be executed.

06 Java

Like Qui Nohn, Java was a key part of the trade route. Having previously focused on agriculture, the Majapahit Empire had turned its attention to trade, creating an incredibly prosperous harbour. Zheng He's fleet arrived at a time of political turmoil but established itself as an important part of the power structure.

05 Qui Nhon

The first stop for the Treasure Fleet was Vijaya, the capital of Champa near what we now know as Qui Nhon in Vietnam. Champa was a centre of trade in the region, dealing with both Arab and Indo-Chinese ships as part of the spice route. It was a regular port-of-call for Zheng He.

Key figures

ZHENG HE EXPLORER
ZHU DI EMPEROR
CHEN ZUYI PIRATE



ZHENG HE

1371-1433

Born into a Persian family, Zheng He was captured in the Ming conquest aged ten. He was castrated and sent into the service of Prince Zhu Di, who would become the Yongle Emperor. Zheng He proved himself in the military and became one of Zhu Di's closest advisors.



YONGLE EMPEROR

1360-1424

Born Zhu Di, his path to power was not easy, fighting rumours and attacks before he violently usurped power from the Jianwen Emperor. He reconstructed China and relocated the capital to Beijing, giving his reign the name 'Yongle', which means perpetual happiness.



CHEN ZUYI

UNKNOWN-1407

Chen Zuyi was one of South-east Asia's most feared pirates, roaming the Strait of Malacca from Penang. Even the Ming armada had fallen foul of his raids. Zheng He issued a challenge to Chen, hoping to draw him into an open fight; accepting it proved to be the pirate's downfall.

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Top 5 facts CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

AN EXPLORER FAMED FOR KICK-STARTING THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD

ITALY, 1451-1506

01 COLUMBUS NEARLY DIED ON HIS FIRST ATLANTIC VOYAGE

Columbus displayed a keen interest in sailing and exploring from an early age, embarking on several voyages in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. However, his first Atlantic expedition in 1476 nearly ended in disaster, as his ship was attacked by French privateers off the coast of Portugal, forcing him to swim to safety.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
Italian, 1451-1506

Brief Bio

Born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451, Columbus had a passion for sea travel from a young age. Keen to lead a voyage to the Orient, he was rejected by several countries – including England – before finally receiving backing from the Spanish royals. In 1492 he set sail for the Far East, but the first land he reached was, in fact, the Bahamas. This discovery brought about a mad dash as European powers jostled to claim a stake in the New World.

02 Asia was the intended destination, not America

Financed by the Spanish monarchy, Columbus embarked on the first of four voyages towards America in 1492 aboard his flagship, the Santa Maria. Accompanied by two smaller ships, he set sail for the Far East. After ten weeks they spotted an island – in the Bahamas, not Asia – that Columbus christened San Salvador (Holy Saviour).

03 He kick-started the Spanish colonisation of America

Between 1493 and 1502, Columbus would make three further voyages towards the west; the second with more men to establish colonies; the third to deliver much-needed supplies; and the fourth in search of the Strait of Malacca, which led the way towards the Indian Ocean.

04 He was a cruel leader

After his first voyage, Columbus was appointed Viceroy and Governor of the Indies. But he wasn't popular, with a number of accusations of cruelty against the natives and use of torture being levelled at him. After he returned from his third voyage in 1500, Columbus was imprisoned with his brothers, who ruled alongside him.

05 His death went unnoticed

By the time he had returned from his fourth voyage in 1504, Columbus was in poor health, suffering from eye inflammation and arthritis. Ignored by the Spanish monarchy for whom he once sailed, he died in 1506 in Valladolid, north-west Spain, having been cared for by his family for the 18 months since his return.

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A. A Louis XIV decorative bath plug

B. An ornate Victorian gyroscope

C. A 14th-century Spanish astrolabe



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Eye Witness

THE FALL OF SAIGON, VIETNAM, 30 APRIL 1975

Written by Ben Biggs

DIRCK HALSTEAD



Over the last 50 years, award-winning photojournalist Dirck Halstead has worked for UPI and *Time* documenting several wars, witnessing the attempted assassination of two US presidents and accompanying Richard Nixon on his tour of China. One of the biggest moments of his career, though, was being in Saigon in the spring of 1975, when North Vietnam invaded.

> “The invasion had begun in earnest, with gunships streaking across rooftops, gunfire and explosions on the streets”

Back in March 1975, photographer Dirck Halstead was taking snapshots of the rich and famous, staying in plush hotels and living a “photographer’s dream assignment” – but he wasn’t happy. The war in Vietnam had passed a pivotal point and now the scales had swung firmly in favour of the communist North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong.

As they made their relentless march towards Saigon, the Americans made plans to pull out. By 21 April, nine days before the final evacuation, Dirck found himself back in the country that had nearly killed him several years before, with what some from the outside looking in might find an unusual perspective...

“I have had a love-hate relationship with Vietnam for many, many years and this is not uncommon. I think if you ask most journalists that worked there they would say the same thing. Covering wars is about the most fun we get to do, because even though they can be terrifying, the emotional highs that come with it are equally extreme. I’m not sure that you would find as many fans of covering wars these days as you did then, because now wars are not fought in fun places generally.

“Vietnam was the exception to that. Vietnam was a fun place to be. The food was absolutely wonderful, it was sophisticated. Cocktail hour sitting on top of the Continental Palace or the roof of the Caravelle [both hotels] was wonderful. So there were a lot of creature comforts in Vietnam that other wars did not have. I think that for me it was a formative experience journalistically, as wars are for many journalists.”

Saigon had been distanced from the front lines for two decades and, with US Ambassador Graham Martin planning to evacuate Americans and refugees under the radar, life went on with relative normality. “As most books will acknowledge, until the last week of the war, Saigon was remarkably unchanged. The bars were still open, the great restaurants were still [serving]... The war still had not come to Saigon and life went on very much as it had for most of the last 20 years. But all you had to do was look at the map. The tide was inexorable.”

Nine days before the final evacuation, Dirck boarded a helicopter to a point on the Saigon-Bien Hoa Highway where he would see some ‘bang-bang’. A single ARVN battalion was holding back the entire North Vietnamese army at a village called Xuan Loc. “I would say that in that month leading up to the collapse you had plenty of chances for excitement – if you want to put it that way. There were opportunities to get onto helicopters, go into places like Xuan Loc. Everybody wanted to do that – in fact, I nearly came to blows with a *Time* magazine correspondent over getting on a helicopter to Xuan Loc.”

At the village, Dirck had a close call. Xuan Loc had been torn apart and was eerily quiet, with just a few friendlies cowering in their nearby foxholes. But as their military escort, led by General Le Minh Dao, moved down the road looking for survivors, gunfire split the air around them and the village erupted. Their escort fled into the only Chinook helicopter available, leaving Dirck and a number of press wondering if that was going to be the end of the war for them, until the chopper returned

"They hung around the embassy in throngs, trying to squeeze onto the two black buses or over the walls"

Origins and aftermath

During the Sixties, the US began to upscale its involvement in Vietnam as the Cold War became more intense and America sought to hold back a 'tide of communism'. American troops were deployed en masse in the early-Sixties, combat units in 1965, with activity peaking in 1968. In an effort to eradicate the guerrilla forces of the Viet Cong, Laos and Cambodia were bombed by the US Air Force. By 1973 though, America ended its military involvement and began to pull out. Following the fall of Saigon, North and South Vietnam were merged into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and over 1 million people were sent to 're-education' (hard-labour) camps.



A US Air Force F-4D conducts a LORAN-assisted bombing in Cambodia

an hour later to take them away from danger, just as the North Vietnamese armoured division was bearing down on them. As strange as it might seem, even at this point Dirck was more embroiled in the unfolding story than in fear for his life: "I had great confidence in the capabilities of the military to get us out of there when the time came. All of us were privy to the planning, so we knew that at a certain time we had to assemble at a given point, get picked up by a bus or put on a helicopter. There was no anxiety on that score.

"We were all busy and every day the noose tightened on Saigon. So if you wanted to go see some bang-bang, you just had to go a little way up the highway. The great thing was that even during the last week when, literally, the fighting was on the bridges coming into Saigon, we still met for cocktail hour in the Continental Palace terrace. It was very strange."

The climax in the days leading up to Saigon's final hour was intense. By 27 April, the weight of the 100,000-strong communist PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam) was at Saigon's outskirts. In the city itself, the fear was that the massacre that had occurred in the city of Hue, perpetrated by PAVN as the front line retreated in 1968, would happen again as the Americans withdrew.

Flights full of refugees fleeing to American soil – both legal and illegal – poured out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, owners of some of the city's most opulent houses traded in their properties for a pittance, while the cost of an American visa rocketed. While on the streets, a less salubrious scene was playing out: American workers swept down upon young Vietnamese women desperate to get out by the dozen and the US embassy simply allowed them to sign affidavits vouching for their support for these women – effectively, in Dirck's words, "subsidising a whole flock of instant pimps."

He continued: "Civilians did everything they could to get out of there somehow, calling on any help that they could find – especially among the Americans – to escape. Their situation was desperate, but, of course, we're professional journalists so we don't get desperate – we just get more into the story."

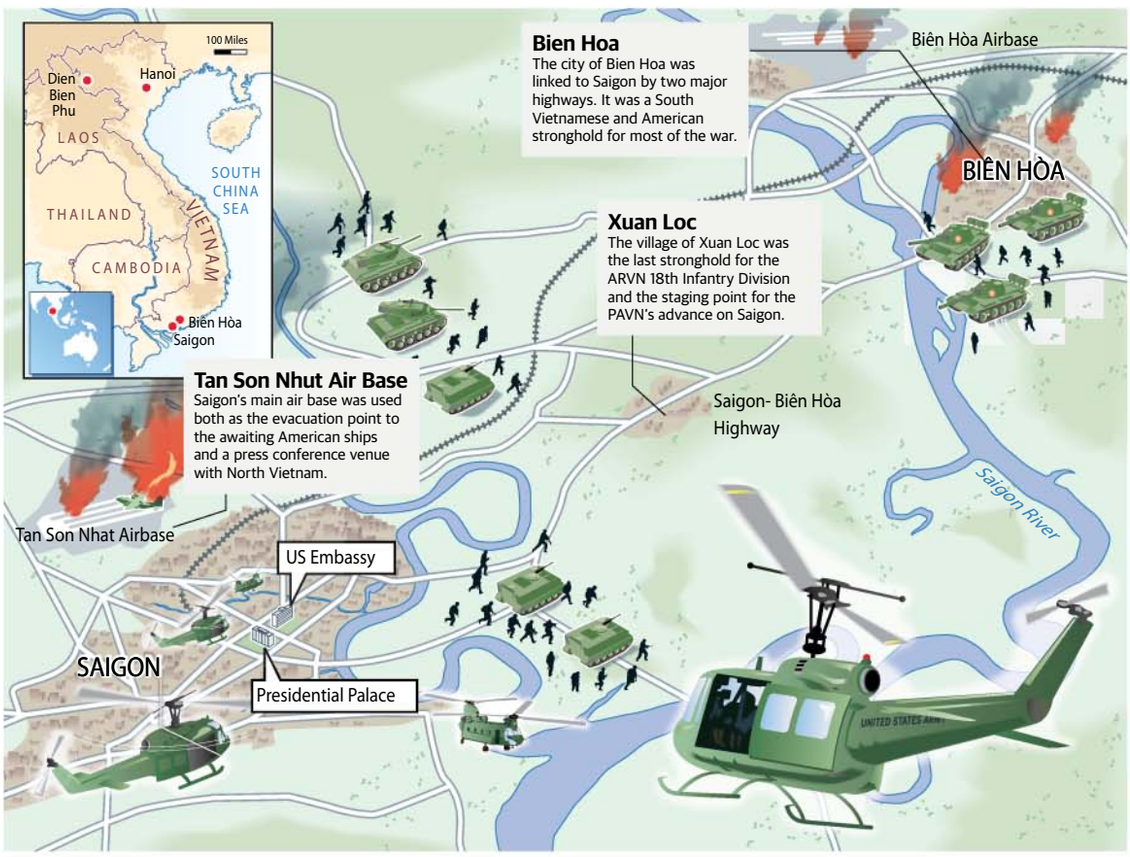
The same day an explosion tore apart the presidential suite in the Majestic Hotel, marking the end of a 40-month period without incident in Saigon. Meanwhile, in the North Vietnamese compound in Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the weekly press conference still went ahead. The representatives from Hanoi and its chief spokesman, Colonel Ba, were answering questions from the gaggle of press gathered there. Anticipation was ripe and one of the questions repeatedly put to the colonel was who would be safe if they stayed in the city once it was taken, to which Colonel Ba's ambiguous answer was, "Anyone who earns an honest living will be welcome."

Despite the ominous-sounding words of the North Vietnamese colonel, Dirck remained unperturbed. "The only personal decision that I felt was incumbent on me to make was the basic one: do I stay or do I go? There were strong reasons for both options. In my case, because I was a contract photographer, I did not necessarily have to go along with any decision that *Time* magazine made, though it was strongly recommended I did. All the staff people, with the exception of the Associated Press – I think [there had been] an order from their New York offices – had to leave and expedite the evacuation of all Vietnamese nationals working for them."

The next day, the invasion had begun in earnest, with gunships streaking across the rooftops, gunfire and explosions on the streets. Though most of the Western press bureaus had cleared their people, there still remained a thinning contingent of 'die-hard Westerners' – predominantly journalists and government officials, clinging on until the very last chopper out of there.

Dirck himself was approached by a Vietnamese colleague – his darkroom man – trying to get his family out. He told him to fetch his family and meet him back there, but the word to evacuate came over the radio as soon as he had gone – "The temperature is 105 and rising" – leaving Dirck with little choice but to rush for the buses to the air base without his workmate.

Here, the sheer plight of those unable to escape became most



apparent. They hung around the embassy in throngs, trying to squeeze onto the two black buses or over the walls to the embassy compound while US Marines pushed them back.

When they couldn't get on the buses, they surged in front, forming a line that blocked its path. With a Marine barking in his face, telling him to "Move it!" while pressing a handgun into his neck, the driver had no choice but to drive the bus straight into the mayhem, inevitably crushing several unfortunate people before it had cleared the crowd.

Well aware of the final stages of the American withdrawal, the PAVN was focusing its attention on securing the city and clearing the last of the South Vietnamese resistance. Nevertheless it wasn't about to let the Americans go without a little encouragement. Tan Son Nhut Air Base had already come under attack and, while the helicopters landed to pick up the remaining press workers and civilians, the Marines guarding the compound were under a rain of mortar fire. The Swift 22 chopper finally came for Dirck, taking him out of Saigon to the safety of a nearby US command ship.

"The evacuation for me involved three different ships. The first helicopter that took me out landed me on the USS Blue Ridge, which was the command ship. That's where a lot of the high-profile people like [Ambassador] Graham Martin were – they all landed on the Blue Ridge. But the problem with that was that it had no fixed-wing capability, so now my whole race was to get this film that was sitting in the middle of the South China Sea to the Philippines and then to New York. That was a real challenge and we had to petition the skipper of the Blue Ridge to get us off there, so that we could get to a carrier.

"I had been forbidden to leave the Blue Ridge, so when a helicopter came in from the Coral Sea to deposit some officers, I made a break for it. They were shouting, "Stop that man!", I jumped on the helicopter and yelled at the pilot to get me off there.

"[Saigon] is right up there [as a defining moment in my career]. The Nixon trip to China was the biggest story because there was so much competition to get on it and I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of six photographers to go on that trip. Everything was brand new and so historic... But looking back, I feel I was very blessed to have been able to go down this path and be there as history was being made in Vietnam."



Under a barrage of explosions, the Marines loaded American and Vietnamese civilians, who feared for their lives, on to helicopters that brought them to waiting aircraft carriers

Have you witnessed a landmark event in history?

Tell us about it at:

/AllAboutHistory @AboutHistoryMag



Dirck Halstead on an evacuation ship in the South China Sea as Saigon falls to North Vietnamese troops in April 1975

The day Saigon was invaded...

03.45am – Frequent Wind ends
The refugee evacuation – Operation Frequent Wind – which had started the day before on 29 April is halted

03.50am – The American ambassador Graham Martin is ordered to evacuate

04.00am – PAVN 324th Division starts to enter Saigon



04.30am – No more Vietnamese evacuees allowed

05.00am – Martin escapes
Ambassador Martin leaves the US embassy for a US Navy ship in the South China Sea

06.00am – PAVN moves into Saigon en masse

07.00am – Final civilians and officials leave via the Tan Son Nhut Air Base



07.53am – The majority of Embassy Marines evacuate via helicopter just before 8am

10.24am – South surrenders
President Minh announces South Vietnam's surrender over the radio, calling for an end to 'unnecessary bloodshed'

11.30am – Ambassador Martin lands safely on the USS Blue Ridge

12.00pm – Independence Palace falls, as tanks crash through the palace's gates

12.15pm – New flag
North Vietnam raises its colours – the flag of the Viet Cong – over the palace



13.30pm – Final five Marines are rescued from the city

16.00pm – All American ships leave for home

© Corbis, Alamy, Getty, Ian Moores Graphics

Bluffer's Guide
The Vikings

NORTHERN EUROPE AND THE WORLD EIGHTH-11TH CENTURIES CE



Who were they?

The Vikings were a race of people from Scandinavia who were best known for raiding in Europe and occasionally beyond. Typically tall, pale-skinned and muscular, with hair and eye colour ranging from dark to fair, their seafaring skill and battle prowess made them the most feared force in Dark Age Europe.

Where were they?

A Germanic people originally from Scandinavia – mainly Norway, Sweden and Denmark – Vikings invaded and settled in areas of Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Scotland and Ireland, as well as conquering northern England and Normandy, France. They were employed as mercenaries by other nations, like Russia, and journeyed to Persia and Morocco, as well as settling in Newfoundland, Canada.

When did they live?

Active in Europe between the eighth and 11th centuries, the Vikings gave their name to the Viking Age of history, culture and art. This is often considered to begin on 8 June 793 with their raid on a monastery on Lindisfarne, a north-eastern English island.

Invading France

Vikings had been raiding western France since the 790s and began to settle colonies there in the 840s; they even raided Paris in 845. In 911, the Viking leader Rollo of Normandy forced their king, Charles the Simple, to give him the Duchy of Normandy if he was baptised as a Christian.



The social hierarchy

Vikings lived in farms and small settlements in a society divided into three main classes: jarls, who were landowners and commanders; karls, who were freemen and farmers; and þræll (thrall), who were slaves and bondsmen. They differed from others in medieval Europe because of their high literacy levels – most of the middle class and above could read.

Conquest of Britain

In 865, Vikings invaded Northumbria, England, and captured York (Jorvik) in 866. York became the centre of Viking England, despite changing hands several times until its reconquest by Erik Haraldsson in 947. In 1016 the Viking king Cnut the Great took the throne of England itself, making it a Viking nation.



Ready for battle

All Viking karls had the right to own weapons and were always expected to carry them. The typical attack weapon was a sword or axe, while ranged options included javelins and bows. Protection came from a wooden shield and, if they could afford it, mail armour. Helmets did *not* have horns, despite often being depicted (see main image).



Vikings were intrepid explorers who ventured all over the globe; here Leif Erikson has just arrived at North America

Master sailors

The Vikings were so successful at exploration thanks to technologies they developed. Their famous longships were flexibly built from overlapping planks, making them able to withstand long voyages. The sailors also used a mineral called solarsteinn (sunstone; possibly Icelandic spar) as a form of compass to indicate the position of the Sun.



Famous for raiding

The most renowned Viking raid was on Lindisfarne in 793. A force landed on the island, killed or enslaved the monks and – according to the eighth-century scholar Alcuin – "poured out the blood of saints around the altar... trampled on the bodies of saints in the temple of God, like dung in the streets" before sailing back home.

Key figures

Ragnar Lodbrok
Circa ninth century
Lodbrok is a semi-legendary figure generally credited with the Siege of Paris in 845.

Ivar the Boneless
Died 873
Allegedly Ragnar Lodbrok's son, with his brothers he conquered East Anglia, England, in late-865, before taking York in 866.

Rollo of Normandy
846-931
Granted land by French king Charles the Simple, Rollo was Duke of Normandy and possibly an ancestor of British royalty.

Leif Erikson
970-1020
Son of Erik the Red, Leif is credited with being the first European to land on the American continent.

Cnut the Great
Circa 990-1035
Probably the most successful of all Vikings, Cnut (or Canute) was king of Norway, Denmark, England and areas of Sweden.

Major events

First recorded Viking raid
789
Vikings raid the Isle of Portland in Dorset, UK, killing the local official who goes to greet them.

The Viking Age begins
8 June 793
Vikings raid the monastery of Lindisfarne, Northumbria, UK, killing most of the monks.

Conquest of Normandy
911
Leader Rollo becomes Duke of Normandy, after brokering a deal with the French king.

Discovery of North America
Circa 11th century
Vikings beat Columbus to the American continent, settling at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, Canada.

Conquest of England
1016
Viking king Cnut the Great claims the English throne, making England a Viking state.

© Look and Learn/Ian Jackson/The Art Agency

Destination
BEIJING, CHINA

Tour Guide: The Forbidden City

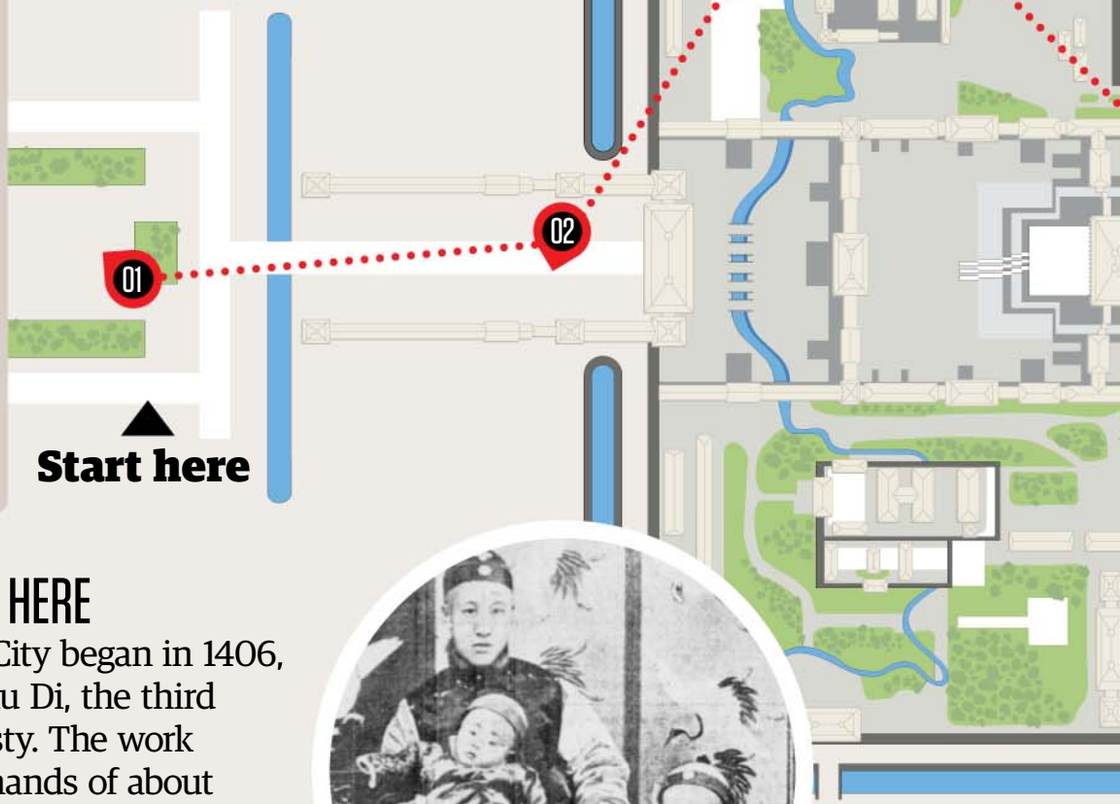


Take a journey to the heart of Beijing to a place that China's emperors called home for half a millennium and which is now the city's biggest tourist attraction



01 The site of student protest and government retaliation

As you approach the Forbidden City you'll walk through Tiananmen Square, the scene of several infamous demonstrations throughout the 20th century. Most famous of all were the student-led protests that took place between April and June 1989 in the square. The Chinese government ordered troops with tanks and rifles to end the occupation of the square, resulting in an indeterminate number of deaths, though the figure is estimated to be in the thousands. The photo of an unknown protestor defying the tanks is arguably one of the most recognisable images of the last 50 years.



02 CONSTRUCTION BEGAN HERE

Construction of the Forbidden City began in 1406, during the reign of Emperor Zhu Di, the third emperor of China's Ming Dynasty. The work was completed in 1420, at the hands of about 1 million labourers and 100,000 craftsmen.

03 The West Gate is opened for the signing of the Beijing Convention

The Second Opium War, which was fought between 1856 and 1860, ended with the signing of the Convention of Beijing. In October 1860, Prince Gong had the West Gate of the Forbidden City opened to the Anglo-French forces. His half-brother, Emperor Xianfeng, had taken his leave of the Forbidden City in late-September. Under the terms of the treaty, the Kowloon Peninsula and New Kowloon – a part of Hong Kong – were ceded to the British. Hong Kong island had become a British colony as a result of the First Opium War nearly 20 years earlier.

04 Holy marble stairway is built

Behind the Hall of Preserving Harmony lies a double set of stairways which are separated by a large, ornate slab of marble. The slab is carved with a series of nine dragons playing with pearls and was installed in the city between 1406 and 1420. Upon completion, this feature of the complex was considered so holy that anyone who touched it, aside from the emperor, was immediately issued the death penalty.

05 The Last Emperor abdicates

In early-1912, Puyi – a six-year-old boy, officially known as the Xuantong Emperor – renounced the throne.

However, under the terms of the abdication agreement signed by Empress Dowager Longyu the previous year, Puyi and the rest of the imperial family were able to remain in the Inner Court of the Forbidden City, which consisted of the Hall of Terrestrial Tranquillity, the Hall of Celestial and Terrestrial Union and the Hall of Celestial Purity – making it the last section of the Forbidden City to be inhabited by an emperor.

10 SUICIDE ON JINGSHAN HILL

In 1644, Chongzhen – the last emperor of the Ming Dynasty – hung himself on a tree on Jingshan Hill (also knownas Coal Hill), as rebel forces led by Li Zicheng neared the Forbidden City.





Inside the Forbidden City today

The Forbidden City was referred to as such because access to the complex depended on the express say-so of the emperor.

However, the city's forbidden days are now long gone. No Chinese emperor has resided in the Forbidden City since 1924, and from 1925 the complex has been a museum – although there have been a few political disruptions along the way.

This period of relative uncertainty was ended when the Forbidden City was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, with the complex protected and administered as a place of considerable historical and cultural importance.

However, the city has still seen its share of controversy. Ten years later, $24 million was set aside for renovation, but not all the work done has proved satisfactory and significant swathes of the former imperial city are not open to the public.

In 2000, a Starbucks café opened, but closed in 2007 after a volley of disapproval regarding the inappropriateness of a coffee chain conducting business on the site.

09 The Last Emperor is expelled from the city

In 1924, Puyi – who had briefly ruled as the Xuantong Emperor – left the Forbidden City for the last time through the Gate of Divine Prowess (the north exit). This brought to an end half a century of dynastic history.

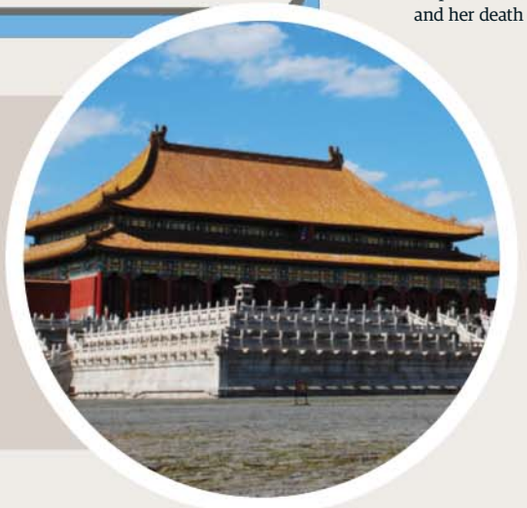


08 Where Shunzhi's favourite concubine died

In the 17th century, the Palace of Eternal Tranquillity was the residence of Emperor Shunzhi's favourite concubine, Dong Fei – along with many other courtesans. The emperor's affection for her was well known and her death caused him great distress.

06 Lightning strikes the city

China's Forbidden City was constructed largely from wood, making it highly susceptible to fire. The first of many fires broke out within a year of the city's completion, on 9 May 1421, when the three main halls – including the Hall of Imperial Supremacy, where laws were once made – burned down after being struck by lightning.



07 REPUBLICAN BOMBS STRUCK HERE

Yanxigong, the Palace of Prolonging Happiness, was bombed in 1917. General Zhang Xun had tried to restore the Last Emperor – Puyi – to the throne and although it was briefly decreed he was emperor again, when a bomb was dropped by a Republican plane – causing relatively minor damage – Puyi's supporters abandoned him.

© Alamy, Corbis



What if... The Cuban Missile Crisis had escalated?

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS 1962

Interview by Jonathan O'Callaghan

DR ERIC SWEDIN



Dr Eric Swedin is an associate professor in the History department at Weber State University in Utah, USA. He is the author of numerous books including *When Angels Wept: A What-If History Of The Cuban Missile Crisis*, which won the 2010 Sidewise Award in Alternate History, and *Survive The Bomb: The Radioactive Citizen's Guide To Nuclear Survival*. He also teaches courses on both modern and historical civilisation.

What would have happened if the Cuban Missile Crisis had escalated into nuclear war?

I think that if the US had chosen to bomb and invade Cuba, it would not have worked out how they expected because there were tactical nukes on the island that they weren't aware of. It looks like, historically, the Soviet commander [on Cuba] had launch authority, and he probably would have used those missiles and that would have shocked the Americans. It could have easily escalated into an exchange of weapons.

The only thing that could have stopped this is if the Soviets realised how small their strategic forces were – [in terms of the] weapons they could hit the USA with. America had an enormous arsenal of munitions that could be used.

Hopefully sanity would have prevailed, but often people get caught up in the situation and I think they could easily have gone on to a general war. In a general war the Soviet Union would have been obliterated. I mean, strategic forces on the side of the US were so strong, so I think the US would have survived the war. Now I'm only talking about 1962; if this war had happened several years later then the US would not have survived as a viable entity, because one of the major knock-on effects of the Cuban Missile Crisis was that the Soviets enormously increased their strategic forces and, within a decade, were on parity with the US.

What was the major turning point in the crisis?

From the revelations after the fall of the Soviet Union with historians being able to look at Soviet military records it's now apparent that, as soon as Kennedy announced the quarantine [a naval blockade on Cuba], Nikita Khrushchev immediately started taking steps to back down.

He stopped the ships that were carrying the missiles towards Cuba, so they did not push on and go 'eyeball to eyeball'. However, the Americans didn't realise that at the time because they weren't getting good intelligence on where exactly the ships were at sea. So Khrushchev really started to back down, but it could easily have still stumbled into war because they didn't have a good mechanism for communicating; the hotline [installed between the two leaders' offices after the crisis] didn't exist at this point.



> "A US city would almost certainly have been hit by a nuke from the Soviets, killing tens of thousands of Americans"

If the crisis had escalated into all-out war, what would have happened first in your opinion?
I think they would have been stumbling into war in gradual escalation. In this scenario, the US not only bombs Cuba but it invades. That's exactly what the military leadership in the US wanted to do. And if they had invaded, [a US city] would almost certainly have been hit by a nuke from the Soviets, killing tens of thousands of Americans.

At that point the invasion [of Cuba] is defeated, the Americans are stunned, and that would have required a response from the US. There would also have been a substantial amount of uncertainty and fear about what the Soviets already had on the island, and I think that the US would have felt justified in using both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons and we can be fairly sure that they would have unfortunately obliterated Cuba.

How would the war have played out?
Soviet forces had about 100 tactical nukes, and I think that once [Cuba had been destroyed] the Soviet Union – in order [to save face] and maintain its international prestige – would have wanted to retaliate. They could have done this by taking Berlin with conventional forces, or they could have prepared to attack Europe or other places where there was tension. And this tit for tat – this unwillingness to be seen as compromising or backing down and trying to force the submission of the foe – would have been even more reckless.

People's emotions quickly get caught up in these things; they don't always make rational choices, and they don't always back down even if that's in their own best interests. [One such scenario could have been] that one of the Soviet light bombers dropped a bomb on New Orleans in Louisiana, where there was an infantry division embarking for the invasion of Cuba. With an American city destroyed at that point the world would sort of teeter [on the brink of war] and the Soviets would recognise very well that they were completely outgunned. Their number of strategic weapons was dramatically short compared to the Americans and they would feel the need to go for it [all guns blazing], because otherwise they're not going to get in any blows if they don't attack immediately.

If the crisis had not been resolved, it's likely several major US cities would have been targeted by nuclear weapons

How the nuclear war would have gone



North America
Following a full-blown nuclear war with the Soviet Union, the USA would have lost about ten per cent of its population, according to Dr Swedin, but would have survived. Cuba would be destroyed.

Soviet Union
Owing to the huge firepower of America, the USSR would have been almost entirely obliterated in a nuclear war, leaving a largely uninhabitable, desolate land post-conflict.

China
Dr Swedin believes China and other nations supporting communism would have been targeted by the US to halt the perceived threat of unified communist countries.

UK
With America placing missiles in Britain, the Soviet Union would see the island as a viable target for its shorter-range missiles, probably resulting in its destruction.

Turkey
Like Britain, America had a number of strategic forces in Turkey that the Soviet Union would have targeted, resulting in the country coming under heavy attack.

Australia
Places deep in the southern hemisphere like Australia may have been able to survive World War III, although fallout from nuclear bombs could have increased cancer rates.

How much of an advantage did the Americans have?
The Soviets had 26 ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] – rockets that can be launched from the Soviet Union and hit the US – and they had none of their submarine-launched ballistic missiles at sea because all their submarines were in port; they were being worked on because they had problems with their nuclear reactors. And they had about 100 bombers that could reach the US. The US had 204 ICBMs, submarine-launched missiles at sea, almost 1,500 strategic bombers and they had enormous other forces. We're not even talking about something close to parity – we're talking about overwhelming power at that point because the Americans had been building up all through the 1950s driven by bad intelligence on how the Soviets had built up. Khrushchev before the Cuban Missile Crisis had wanted to spend money on the civilian economy, so he had been cutting the military budget. The Soviets reversed course after the Cuban Missile Crisis, though, spending a tremendous amount on strategic forces.

Do you think it would have been a case of mutually assured destruction (MAD)?
It sounds horrible, but certainly the Soviet Union would have been destroyed. And Europe would have been largely destroyed because the Soviets had a substantial number of ever-shorter range weapons that could have been used on Europe; it's just they didn't have a lot of weapons that could hit the USA.

I think the US could have been hit with enough weapons to kill maybe about ten per cent of the population, but I think it would have been survivable. This was before [the time] people started putting their ICBMs into deep silos, so most of the explosions would have been airbursts as opposed to ground-bursts. That would have dramatically reduced the amount of fallout.

I think there were still substantial ecological consequences besides all the immediate destruction, but I don't think it would have been nuclear winter. Five years later, yes, it would have been because when you were trying to destroy the other country's missiles in the ground – when they're in deep silos – you're going to do ground-bursts to try and destroy them, not airbursts which the silos were designed to withstand.

People don't realise that there's a big difference between exploding a nuke in the atmosphere above a target and exploding it by letting it hit the ground. If you detonate it in the air, like over Hiroshima and Nagasaki [during World War II], you maximise your immediate blast effects, but you minimise your fallout. On the other hand, when you aim them at the ground you actually don't get as many blast effects except in the immediate area, but you maximise your fallout. And when I'm talking about minimise and maximise, we're talking about orders of thousands of percentage in magnitude between the two types [of explosion].

How would it be different?

Real timeline

1959

Castro comes to power in Cuba
Fidel Castro is sworn in as the prime minister of Cuba following the Cuban revolution and breaks ties with the US in favour of the Soviet Union.
16 February 1959



Bay of Pigs invasion
A counterrevolutionary military trained by the CIA to overthrow Castro fails in three days. In February 1962 the US announces an embargo on Cuba, which drives the communist nation to strengthen ties with the USSR.
17 April 1961



Cuba armed with nuclear weapons
The Soviet Union – partially in response to the US placing missiles in Turkey – begins building missile facilities in Cuba capable of launching nuclear weapons at the USA.
August 1962



The US discovers weapons on Cuba
After a U-2 spy plane flying over western Cuba finds missile sites, the US begins considering both diplomatic and military actions.
14 October 1962

Naval blockade of Cuba
Following consideration of an invasion, President Kennedy instead opts to 'quarantine' Cuba with a naval blockade to prevent any more Soviet ships from reaching the island.
21 October 1962

Real timeline

Alternate timeline



At the time, the Soviets didn't have many weapons that could have hit the US, but destruction of the USSR would have been assured

Would Europe have got involved in the conflict – and would it have led to World War III?

I think it would have been World War III. We don't know exactly what the Soviet operating plan was, but we do know the US plan because parts of it have been declassified. The SIOP [Single Integrated Operational Plan] was [an outline] of what targets to hit during a general nuclear war.

The US would have attacked China because at that time they saw communism – even though it was changing – as a monolithic whole. Eastern Europe and other communist countries would have been hit for this reason too.

And the plan did not allow for a lot of modifications; it was designed to maximise the efficiency and the use of the weapons, and assuming the Soviets had a similar plan they would have also tried to destroy American forces and US allies. One of the causes of the factors of the crisis was that there were shorter-range US Jupiter and Thor missiles in Turkey and Britain. So at the very least those would have been considered completely legitimate targets. In a general nuclear war Europe would not have been able to avoid being embroiled – officially as targets rather than acting participants striking back. It was just the nature of the time period.

What state would the world be in today?

I think you would have had substantial damage to the ozone layer and the northern hemisphere. You would have seen the complete collapse of the countries, societies and economies of all of Europe and the Soviet Union. I think the US would have survived, but I think they probably would have drawn inwards since their foes were gone. You may have seen the southern hemisphere flourish because there would have been a lot less fallout and effects down there.

One thing we almost certainly would never have seen was a man walk on the Moon, as that was very much driven by Cold War rivalry. With no such war the US would not have been spending its money on the Apollo project – it would have been spending money on trying to rebuild its country. The enormous loss of the population would have been dramatic too. Continuing effects from radiation would have caused higher cancer rates in the north and probably the south too.

Could this situation ever happen again?

We always hope that things like this won't happen. Since the end of the Cold War both the Soviets [now the Russians] and the Americans have dramatically built down their strategic forces. They're no longer on trigger alert towards each other like they were during the Cold War.

I think the most likely scenario that we'd see today is the use of a dirty bomb, or a rogue nuke, or a smaller nuke, and I think it would be similar to 9/11 except on a dramatically vaster scale. That being said, I can also see India descending into war, and I can easily see Pakistan losing some of its weapons and those falling into the hands of non-state actors and being used. I personally expect in my lifetime to see another nuclear weapon used, and it's going to be a terrorist group or non-state actor setting it off.

Have your say

Do you agree with our expert's view?

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"One thing we almost certainly would never have seen was a man walk on the Moon, as that was driven by Cold War rivalry"

The US goes to DEFCON 2
All Soviet ships en route to Cuba either slow down or reverse. The following day the US raises its military alertness to DEFCON 2, the highest level in American history.
24 October 1962

Khrushchev's proposal
Soviet Chairman Khrushchev sends a letter to President Kennedy proposing that Soviet missiles will be removed from Cuba if the US agrees never to invade the island.
26 October 1962

The crisis ends
Khrushchev convinces Kennedy that the U-2 shooting was not under his authority. Kennedy accepts and a deal is reached to withdraw Soviet weapons from Cuba, while the US agrees not to invade and withdraws its missiles from Turkey.
28 October 1962



Invasion of Cuba
The US decides on a militaristic approach. On this day they attempt another invasion of Cuba in order to seize the weapons on the island. The US military alertness is raised to DEFCON 1.
25 October 1962

U-2 shot down
An American U-2 plane is shot down over Cuba, under the lone authority of a Soviet commander on the island, and its pilot Major Rudolf Anderson is killed. Tensions between the US and Soviet Union strain and nuclear war seems inevitable.
27 October 1962



Aftermath
90 per cent of the US survives the nuclear war, but much of the rest of the northern hemisphere lies in ruins. Places deep in the southern hemisphere survive. Eventually, nuclear winter takes hold of large parts of the world, leaving it desolate and, in parts, uninhabitable.
1963

Diplomatic negotiations cease
As the world teeters on the brink of a third World War, any hopes of a diplomatic resolution between the US and Soviet Union are quashed
24 October 1962

First nuclear missile launched
The Soviet commander on Cuba, under his own authority, launches a tactical nuke against the US. America is stunned and immediately begins preparations for a nuclear war.
26 October 1962



World War III begins
The Soviet Union invades Berlin and fires upon targets in both the US and Europe, but the overwhelming firepower of the Americans makes the outcome of the war almost inevitable.
November 1962

Obliteration
The US strikes Cuba, the Soviet Union and other communist states with its full might. Ultimately, Cuba and the Soviet Union are obliterated, along with much of Europe as the USSR retaliates.
December 1962

© Craig Mullins/Bethsoft

What was it like?

SYDNEY, 1939

Finance

Due to the Great Depression, the US had long since stopped investing in other countries and the UK had called in its loans. Australia suffered, but it survived, and by 1939 cities like Sydney were starting to recover, with more jobs and higher production of goods.

Technology

As a result of overproduction of all kinds of perishable foods, engineers in Sydney developed a new, efficient way of canning food (the 'open top') for exporting goods. Meanwhile, research was underway to perfect a process to shrink-proof wool, something which later would become indispensable to soldiers.

Industry

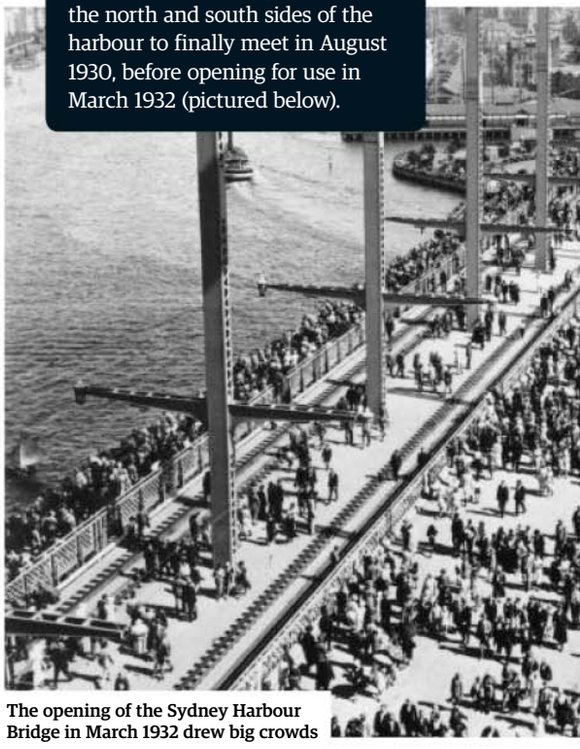
Against the gloom of the Great Depression, the Sydney Harbour Bridge stood out as a symbol of hope. Its two halves grew from the north and south sides of the harbour to finally meet in August 1930, before opening for use in March 1932 (pictured below).



In the early-20th century, Sydney was booming, but like many other cities the Great Depression and the start of World War II were about to take their toll...

War was overtaking Europe, and Australia – on the other side of the world – was about to become drawn in. As Hitler marched into Poland in 1939, and elicited Britain's declaration of war, Australia stood ready to support the crown and began recruiting volunteers for the new Second Australian Imperial Force. Sydney was a centre of trade and education, a powerful metropolis near to Canberra and Melbourne, and it contributed much to the war effort. Not only did Sydneysiders join the Allies in battlefields including Libya, Germany and Singapore, but they later welcomed American soldiers who decided they would like to settle in New South Wales after the war.

The Aboriginal population faced tough times, beset by harsh management in the Reserves. Many in and around Sydney were also refugees from the great bushfires that swept across Victoria on 13 January 1939. Yet matters were afoot in nearby Melbourne, when the arrest of activist Jack Patten instigated the Cummeragunja Walk-off that saw 200 Aboriginal people leave the Mission to live off the land. Patten had returned to discuss the plight of Aboriginals and allegations of mistreatment when he was arrested at a public meeting and hauled off-stage. The walk-off was seen as one of the first examples of organised, union-like behaviour by the Aboriginal people, paving the way for more even-footed discussions in the future.



The opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in March 1932 drew big crowds

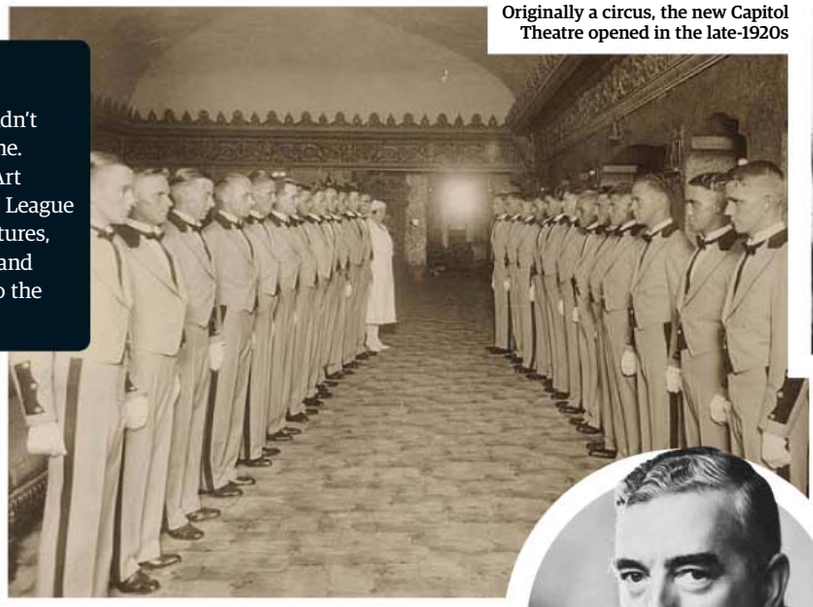
What was it like?
SYDNEY, 1939



Copies of *The Sydney Morning Herald* being unloaded in O'Connell Street

Media

Experimental TV broadcasts, like silent films, were put on hold in 1939. As before, most would get their news via *The Sydney Morning Herald*. The newspaper's weekly edition had only stopped running the year before and the *Herald* played a pivotal role in keeping Sydneysiders informed.



Originally a circus, the new Capitol Theatre opened in the late-1920s

Art

The economic downturn hadn't dampened Sydney's art scene. Formerly Sydney Workers' Art Club, Sydney's New Theatre League was established to offer 'lectures, musical recitals, art classes and the exhibition of pictures' to the working classes of the city.



Military

Having recovered from WWI, Australia's military stood ready to support the UK during WWII. The Second Australian Imperial Force, composed of volunteers, was sent to aid the Allies along with the Royal Australian Air Force and Navy. Sydneysiders fought everywhere from Europe and northern Africa to South-east Asia and the Pacific Ocean.





Government

On 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Robert Menzies (right) announced Australia was at war. When he was sworn in later that year, he was leader of the United Australia Party, successor to the Nationalist Party of Australia and predecessor to the Liberal Party of Australia that he'd set up in 1945.

Education

Sydney had led the way in education for years. The Great Depression, however, took its toll and, despite resistance to the reintroduction of tuition fees for secondary schools, it still couldn't account for 40 per cent of the primary school children from 1934.

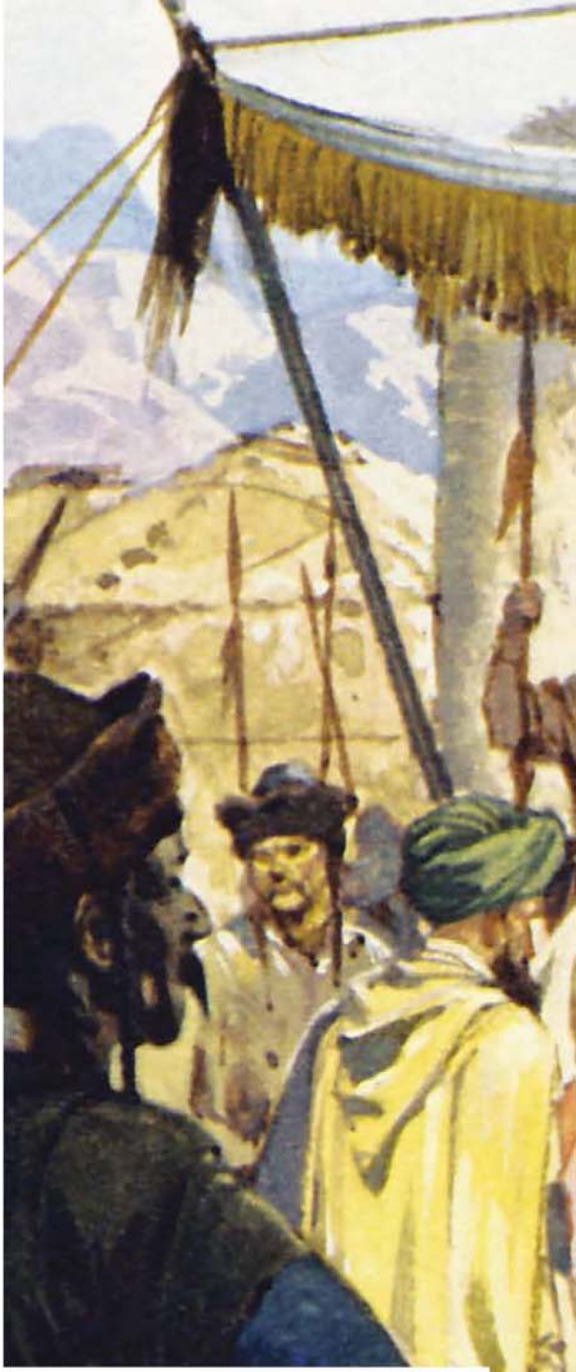


Sydney boasted the best schools in the country before the Depression

© Getty

Heroes & Villains

Genghis Khan



The early-13th century saw a nomad rise from the tribal chaos of the Mongolian steppes to build an empire four times larger than Alexander the Great's

Written by Dave Roos

In the Western imagination, Genghis Khan is the blood-soaked infidel at the head of the Mongol hordes, wild-eyed murderers on horseback who slaughtered millions in a crusade for world domination.

He is the indiscriminate punisher, laying waste to great civilisations. But history tells a different story. Yes, Genghis Khan and his army wrought a lot of bloodshed, but it was not indiscriminate. In fact, Genghis Khan may have been the medieval era's greatest military and political strategist, forging alliances and dispatching enemies with an eye to ultimate unification.

Genghis Khan's story begins in the mid-12th century at the edge of the Gobi Desert in eastern Mongolia. The Mongols followed a fiercely nomadic lifestyle centred around horses, in which families pledged loyalty to one of 30 or more tribes and slept in circular yurts called gers. Khan's father, a tribal chief, named his son Temüjin after a captured chief from a rival clan called the Tatars. Such was life in medieval Mongolia – a perpetual cycle of kidnappings and raids fuelled by blood feuds dating back centuries. Temüjin's grandfather, Khabul Khan, had briefly united the warring tribes during the 1100s, but that was ancient history.

Young Temüjin's life would be torn apart by tribal warfare. Aged nine, Temüjin was taken to a nearby tribe to live with the family of his betrothed. His father, Yesügei, was intercepted on the journey home by a band of Tatars, who tricked him into eating poisoned food, which killed him. When Temüjin received news of his father's death, he rushed home to assume tribal leadership and protect his family. But the tribe rejected his claim to power and abandoned his mother and his young brothers, leaving them to scavenge the desert wilderness for survival.

Khan's genetic legacy – imposed by rape of enemy women and many concubines – is present in 16 million male descendants, reportedly

Temüjin's mother, Höelün, was herself kidnapped from the rival Merkits, and taught young Temüjin the importance of strength in numbers. As long as a tribe was unified, it couldn't be destroyed. Temüjin took that advice to heart, forging bonds with his father's former allies as a teenager. After he married at 16 to his betrothed Börte, he set out to present gifts to neighbouring tribal leaders in exchange for loyalty and mutual protection. While away, a legion of Merkit horsemen attacked his mother's camp, stealing away his bride.

At this point, Temüjin had a choice to make. He and his brothers could succumb to their thirst for revenge and pursue Börte's captors, or they could take a more strategic approach. Temüjin petitioned some of his allies for support, won their loyalty



Genghis Khan invented the passport, an iron medallion that allowed safe passage across his vast empire



The Mongol ruler did not kill 1,748,000 in an hour, but did murder every man, woman and child in the city of Nishapur

"Such was life in medieval Mongolia – a perpetual cycle of kidnappings and raids"



The Mongols captured the fortress-like Khara Khoto in 1226 and used its 3.7m (12ft)-thick walls to repel enemies until China's Ming Dynasty cut off water in 1372

Life in medieval Mongolia...

Tribal trouble

Temüjin, the boy who would become Genghis Khan, was born into a violent nomadic society, where warring tribes or confederations raided and plundered each other in a ruthless cycle of vengeance and betrayal. Genghis Khan's first great achievement was to unite these tribes under one Mongol banner.

Life on horseback

Mongol children learned to ride a horse as soon as they could walk. In nomadic Mongol culture, horses were more than transportation; they were hunting companions, war machines and, in desperate times, even food. Marco Polo reported that starving Mongol warriors would drink the blood of their horses for sustenance.

Strong women

Genghis Khan's mother Höelün and wife Börte are examples of strong Mongol women who were not only expected to raise the children, tend to livestock and prepare meals, but also collect arrows after battle and finish off wounded enemies. Genghis Khan's daughter became a fierce military leader too.

Moral code

As supreme leader of the Mongols, Genghis Khan was also its chief lawmaker. He wrote the *Great Yasa* as a guide to Mongol behaviour, which punished lying, stealing and adultery by death, and promoted humility and respect for all religions.

Anti-civilisation

Genghis Khan remained a nomad until the very end, refusing to establish a capital city for the Mongols. Mongol armies had no regard for the trappings of civilisation, sacking and burning priceless libraries and cultural treasures throughout the Islamic world.

Necessity of violence

Genghis Khan's war-like ways were driven just as much by economic necessity as they were by a lust for power and territory. As the Mongol population grew so food and resources became scarce and in 1211 his forces struck the Jin Dynasty in northern China to plunder their bountiful rice fields.

"He spared his enemy's best horsemen and weapons experts, folding them into his growing army"

and assembled a small army of 500 men to raid the Merkit camp with devastating force. Not only did he liberate Börte but he utterly destroyed the Merkits.

Throughout his twenties and thirties, Temüjin would continue this pattern, strengthening his political alliances, sharpening his military tactics and expanding his reputation as a merciless butcher. He annihilated his father's murderers, the Tatars, allegedly ordering the death of all males over three foot tall. He boiled enemy chieftains alive and built pyramids from the skulls of vanquished foes. All the while, he spared his enemy's best horsemen and weapons experts, folding them into his growing army.

By 40 years old, Temüjin had achieved the unthinkable: the complete unification of the Mongol tribes. Having absorbed, subjugated or destroyed his political rivals, tens of thousands of his loyal followers gathered at a massive spiritual coronation called a khuritai, during which Temüjin the warrior was renamed Genghis Khan – literally 'king of the ocean', or 'universal ruler'.

Genghis Khan now commanded an army of 100,000 or more. These fighters weren't the barbaric raiders of lore, but a disciplined and highly trained war machine. Rank was based on merit and proven loyalty, not relations to the khan. Squads were composed of ten men, companies of 100 and divisions of 10,000. The Mongol horse – small and swift – was like a jet fighter. Mongol riders could fire their composite bows forward or backward while riding full speed, launching armour-piercing arrows as far as 320 metres (1,050 feet).

For centuries, the Mongol nomads paid steep taxes to travel along the Silk Road and conduct trade with the Chinese, who had amassed vast wealth in terms of food, technology and treasure. For his first great conquest, Genghis Khan set his sights on Xixia, a Chinese empire ruled by the Tanguts from Tibet. Outnumbered by the Xia defenders, the Mongol army employed a favourite tactic: false retreat. When the Xia warriors pursued the fleeing Mongols, Khan was waiting with a barrage of arrows.

Once Xixia pledged loyalty to the Mongols, Genghis Khan pushed east to the much larger Jin Dynasty, whose 600,000-strong army was busy fighting the Song Dynasty to the south at the time. The Mongol army moved easily toward the capital Zhongdu (now Beijing) – the Great Wall wasn't built yet – but lacked the weaponry to siege the fortified city. Always the strategist, Temüjin set his armies free to plunder smaller cities, acquiring Chinese experts on siege warfare.



Genghis the god

The word 'khan' is an honorary title meaning 'sovereign ruler' in Altaic, a family of languages stretching across the Mongol Empire. In 1206, the young Temüjin was made the sole political and military leader of the newly unified nomadic tribes and given the title Genghis Khan, or 'universal ruler'. Like most Mongol warriors, Genghis Khan practised a form of shamanism called Tengriism and worshipped a god called Koko Mongke Tengri ('Eternal Blue Sky'). When he was named Genghis Khan, he was designated the earthly representative of Eternal Blue Sky. This holy mantle gave Genghis Khan the spiritual authority to rule over more 'civilised' nations. As Genghis Khan often proclaimed to his subjects, "One sun in heaven; one lord on Earth." As a ruler, though, he was unexpectedly tolerant to other religions, allowing Muslims, Christians and Buddhists to worship freely in his empire.

In order to communicate across thousands of miles, Genghis Khan designed a medieval 'Pony Express' network

Defining moment

Marriage of Börte 1178

At 16, Temüjin and Börte get marries, however the nuptial bliss is cut short by tragedy. While Temüjin is away establishing alliances with neighbouring chieftains, his home encampment is raided by Merkit tribesmen who vow to steal every woman in revenge for the kidnapping of Temüjin's mother. Temüjin returns in time to rescue his mother and brothers, but cannot save Börte, who has already been carried back to the Merkit camp. Temüjin makes the conscious decision not to pursue the Merkits immediately, but to assemble an army of supporters. Only when he has 500 men under his command does Temüjin crush the Merkits, returning home with Börte and the spoils of war, eg animals, women and weapons.



Timeline

1162

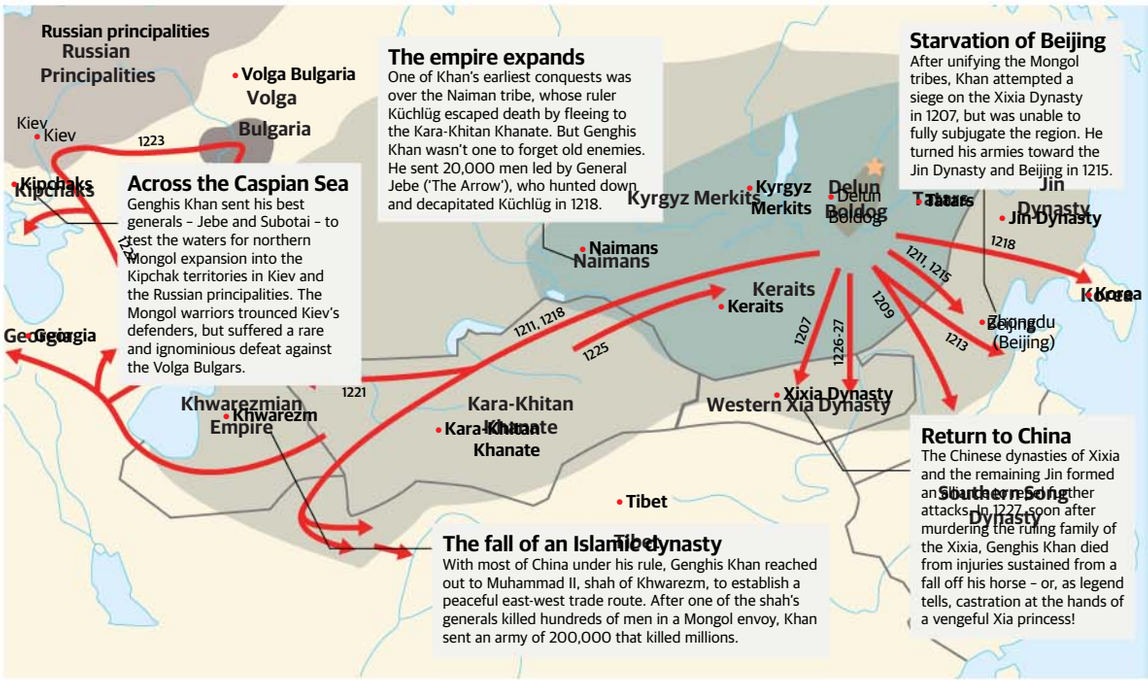
Birth of Temüjin
The nomadic Mongols kept no birth records and were unconcerned with tracking age, so it's impossible to know the exact birth date of Temüjin. We know he was born into a ruling family of the Borjigin tribe and was a direct descendant of Khabul Khan, who united the Mongols in the early-12th century. According to legend, Temüjin is born clasping a blood clot – a sign he'll be a powerful leader.
Circa 1162

Death of Temüjin's father
When Temüjin is only nine, he is promised in marriage to a girl named Börte from the neighbouring Olkhunut tribe. According to tradition, Temüjin is brought to live with the Olkhunut. While his father, Yesügei, rides home, he is tricked by Tatar clansmen into eating poisoned food that kills him.
1171

Murder in the family
Temüjin's mother Höelün is abandoned by the rest of the clan. Temüjin returns home to help Höelün care for his younger brothers and several half-brothers. However, when a half-brother attempts to steal one of Temüjin's fish, the future khan kills him with an arrow.
1175

Birth of an heir
When Börte is rescued from the Merkit tribe, she is pregnant, and there is some question whether the child is Temüjin's or the Merkit chieftain's. Temüjin accepts his son Jochi as his first-born male heir.
1181

A thirst for power
Young Temüjin is determined to break down the divisions between tribes. Those who would not join his Mongol alliance would have to be destroyed or assimilated. His first act is to exact revenge on the Tatars who had poisoned his father.
1187



Despite centuries of exploration, Genghis Khan's hidden tomb, rumoured to contain priceless treasures, has never been found

When the Mongols returned to Zhongdu in 1214, they were armed with trebuchets capable of hurling 45-kilogram (100-pound) stones or 'bombs' of sulphurous petroleum called naphtha. Cut off from food imports, the residents of Zhongdu were starved into submission and Khan plundered its treasures and massacred its remaining holdouts.

After easily wresting control of the Kara-Khitan Khanate west of Mongolia, Genghis Khan dreamed of extending his reach along the full length of the Silk Road to the Caspian Sea. The only remaining obstacle was the Muslim kingdom of Khwarezm, ruled by Shah Muhammad II. The Mongols extended a rare hand of diplomacy, showering the shah with gifts in exchange for a free trade route through his territories. That all changed when a diplomatic convoy of unarmed Mongol merchants was killed by one of Muhammad's governors.

Genghis Khan's response to that treacherous act may be one of the most murderous in the history of warfare. The Mongol army pursued a three-year campaign of death and destruction that would claim millions of lives and erase centuries of Islamic literature, art and culture. In Urgench, the Mongols diverted a river to drown remaining survivors and stamp out all signs of the city. In Balkh, the hundreds of thousands of residents surrendered immediately, were divided into the useful and not useful, and then murdered anyway.

While Genghis Khan himself returned to the Mongolian heartland to oversee his immense bureaucracy, he sent his best generals on a scouting mission around the Caspian Sea, through the Ukraine and into Russia. The European armies had never encountered such an enemy, attacking with alarming speed and calculated brutality. Decades later, under the command of Khan's grandson, Batu, the Mongols would return to establish the Golden Horde, which would rule eastern Europe until the 1500s.

Genghis Khan would not live to see the fullest extent of his self-made empire. After falling from his horse in battle against a Chinese insurrection, he died from his injuries in 1227. His grandson Kublai Khan would ultimately bring all of China under Mongol control, creating the largest empire the world had ever seen. Genghis Khan may have left a legacy of merciless brutality, but he is also credited with opening up the first major trade and cultural exchange between the East and the West.



Defining moment

Annihilation of Khwarezm 1219

Driven by vengeance, Genghis Khan lays waste to this Muslim empire, telling the few survivors of the city of Bukhara: "I am the flail [a spiked medieval weapon] of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you."



Defining moment

Burial of a khan 1227

Genghis Khan left instructions to bury him according to the traditions of his tribe, without any markings or signs. To this day, his exact burial location is unknown. Legend tells that the burial team trampled the site with horses, redirected a river to run over it and then killed all witnesses.



Becoming a leader
Through strategic alliances and brute force, Temüjin is able to unite the warring nomad tribes into a single Mongol Empire. His loyal followers, culled from the top ranks of each rival clan, elect him as their 'supreme leader', otherwise known as Genghis Khan.
1206

Pillaging of China
Always the strategist, Genghis Khan turns his armies first on the Chinese dynasties of Xixia and Jin. The huge Mongol army is starved for resources and weaponry, which they find abundant in China. The Mongols put captured Chinese engineers to work building war machines.
1207



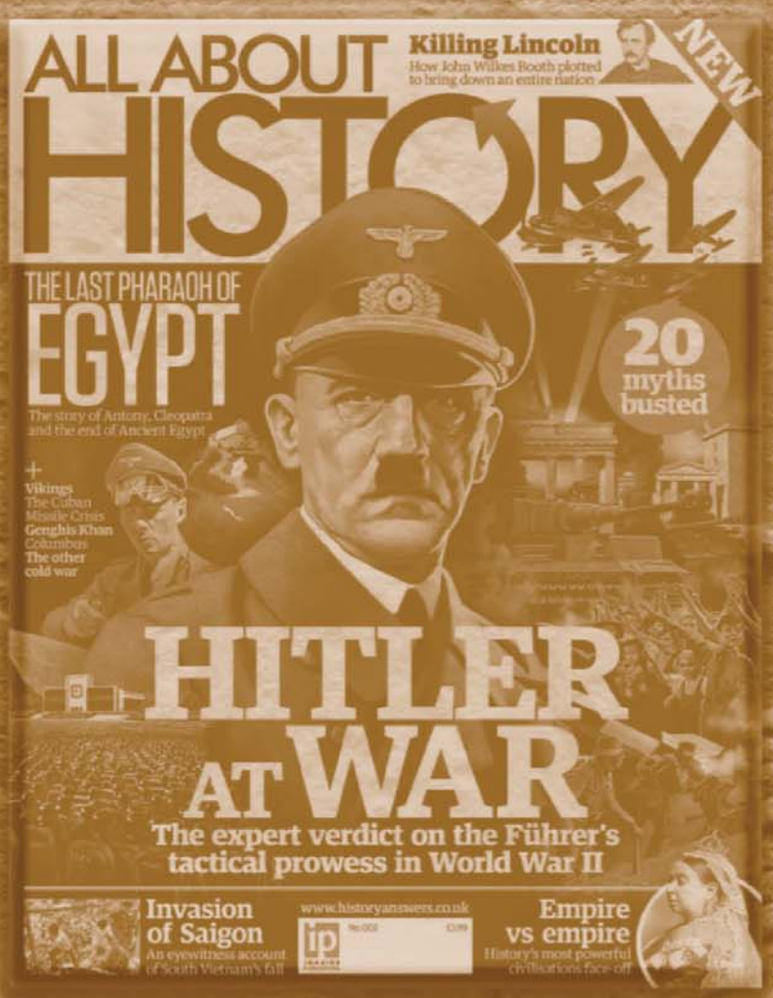
Pax Mongolica
With the defeat of Khwarezm and the Russian principalities, Genghis Khan's dynasty now spreads across two continents. This heralds a century-long period of trade, cultural exchange and relative peace.
1225

1227

Genghis Khan dies
One of Genghis Khan's final triumphs is the suppression of Chinese revolutionaries in the Xixia and Jin dynasties. While chasing down the enemy, he falls off his horse and dies from the injuries. However, some claim he is mortally wounded by a knife-wielding Xia princess when he tried to claim 'spoils'.
1227

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DISCOVER



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HITLER AT WAR

To what extent did the Führer's military leadership style affect the outcome of World War II? We get expert Dr Geoffrey Megargee's verdict on Adolf Hitler's tactical prowess

Written by Jonathan O'Callaghan



DR GEOFFREY MEGARGEE



Brief Bio

Dr Megargee wrote his book, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, after becoming a recipient of the J William Fulbright grant for his research in Germany. He is also a senior applied research scholar at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Since the fall of the Third Reich in 1945, our verdict on Hitler's leadership has mostly come from the pens and mouths of his generals. Many of these men had grown to resent their former leader, and with the fall of Germany they seized the opportunity to criticise and embarrass the Führer at every opportunity. But beneath the façade of slander and betrayal, was Hitler's military leadership style truly so unpopular – and to what extent did his decisions determine the outcome of World War II?

"So much of what we thought we knew about Hitler for many years came from his generals, and they have a lot of reasons to either consciously or unconsciously falsify what happened," says Dr Geoffrey Megargee. "They more or less accused him of starting the war against their advice and then of losing it through his meddling, but that doesn't really give us an accurate picture."

When Germany declared war on Poland on 1 September 1939, they had not expected to encounter such fierce opposition from Britain and France. After both countries declared war on the Third Reich in response, the German population were distraught; World War I was still fresh in the nation's memory, and the country had only just started to thrive again from the harsh penalties imposed after their defeat in 1918 and later the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Now the leader of the Nazi party was dragging them into another war against familiar foes. Despite his popularity, Hitler was not immune to criticism and the start of World War II saw a significant drop in morale in Germany.

But that all changed when France fell in just a matter of weeks to Germany's Blitzkrieg tactics. According to Dr Megargee, "Once France was knocked out of the war, I suspect at that point Hitler probably reached about the high point of his popularity with the German population because Germany had just managed to defeat in a matter of weeks this enemy that had defeated them over four years of combat in World War I. That was quite a coup."

Riding on this success, Hitler quickly involved himself in all aspects of the operations of the German army – much more so than the respective leaders of other countries. He was known for an attention to detail that was interfering at best, and detrimental at worst. "Hitler was in charge of strategy from the start, figuring out against whom Germany was going to fight, and his decisions were not nearly so unpopular as [his generals] tried to say later on.

"They were all in favour of starting a war against Poland, they were all in favour of starting a war against the Soviet Union – these were not unpopular decisions on Hitler's part. ▶



"But when we get down to the next level of warfare – operations, ie planning and conducting campaigns – here Hitler was on weaker ground. He had some good insights, and some of his decisions turned out well, but he didn't have any systematic training in this kind of warfare and that showed."

The popular picture of Hitler is of a man that heeded no advice – a leader that would rather listen to his own gut instinct than to the rational arguments of his generals. This was true to an extent; Hitler was distrustful of some of his senior officers, who in turn criticised him for his inexperience in warfare, and he certainly grew more distrustful and erratic as the war progressed.

That being said it was largely the officers themselves that have swayed our view of Hitler's leadership, as they resented his involvement in their military, as Dr Megargee points out. "General [Franz] Halder, for example – who was chief of the general staff from October 1938 to September 1942 – maintained a sort of passive-aggressive relationship with Hitler. He would agree openly with what Hitler had to say, but would then try to work around the decisions that Hitler made." However, for the first few years of the war at least, Hitler relied upon his generals greatly and would seek their advice on both strategy and tactics, albeit some more so than others.

The Führer, though, was not blithely ignorant; he was well aware of the hatred some of his officers felt towards him, and he used this to his advantage at every available opportunity. "He tended to play off commanders against each other. They would throw in their opinions at briefings and he would go with whoever he agreed with, so it was sort of a divide-and-conquer kind of approach to leadership. And once he made up his mind on something he could be extremely stubborn about it."

As mentioned the Führer had an uncanny attention to detail and thus involved himself in the smallest of minutiae about particular units, and many of his generals would be caught short if they could not supply him with precise information – such as, for instance, the number of tanks in a particular division. By 1943 Hitler had started bringing two stenographers (court recorders) to each of his meetings, and although many records were burned at the end of the war, those that survived reveal Hitler's meetings to be intricate to the point that they were discussing the movements of very small units on the front and their equipment.

Hitler's level of involvement was beginning to pose a problem. : "You could argue that Hitler was too detailed. When you start talking about how

The invasion of Poland

1-27 September 1939

On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, and just two days later both Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

The campaign in Poland was devised by General Franz Halder, chief of the general staff, but it was ultimately Hitler who gave the order to invade. Germany employed Blitzkrieg (which translates as 'lightning war') tactics, denting Poland's front lines with Panzer tanks and aircraft before troops moved through gaps this created0. The approach was hugely successful, although it was not one that Hitler came up with. On 27 September 1939 Poland surrendered, albeit with a Soviet invasion from the east dividing the country.

The effects of this campaign were felt across the globe and signalled the start of World War II. Hitler would go on to employ the same tactics in other countries, including France in 1940.

The expert's view

"If Germany was going to have a war, then September 1939 was probably the best time to attack," says Dr Megargee. "The Allies were getting stronger, so the timing was working against Germany at that point and I think Hitler even said that. But, of course, he was counting on Britain and France to stay out of it. He figured they would let Poland go; he underestimated them on that point."

Verdict: Success

"The whole idea of starting the war was a poor strategic decision, but if Hitler was going to start one this was probably the best he could do."



General Franz Halder (left) with General Von Brauchitsch



Hitler watches on as German troops march towards Poland

"When you start talking about how many trucks a particular unit has at its disposal, that's just ridiculous for a head of state to try to interpret"



General Halder (at Hitler's left), discussing plans with General Jodl (at Hitler's right) and others over a large map

The fall of France

10 May - 22 June 1940

Resigned to the fact that both Britain and France had declared war, Hitler knew that he needed to nullify France to have any chance of fending off the Allies. So, on 10 May 1940, Germany invaded its Gallic neighbour.

The campaign consisted of two operations. The first was Case Yellow (Fall Gelb), where German forces advanced into the Ardennes region and pushed the Allied forces in Belgium back to the sea. This ultimately resulted in the mass evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June.

A second operation known as Case Red (Fall Rot) began on 5 June, with Germany's air superiority and armoured units overcoming the depleted French forces. German forces pushed into Paris on 14 June, and by 22 June they had signed an armistice with the French that would see Germany occupy the north and the west of the country until 1944.

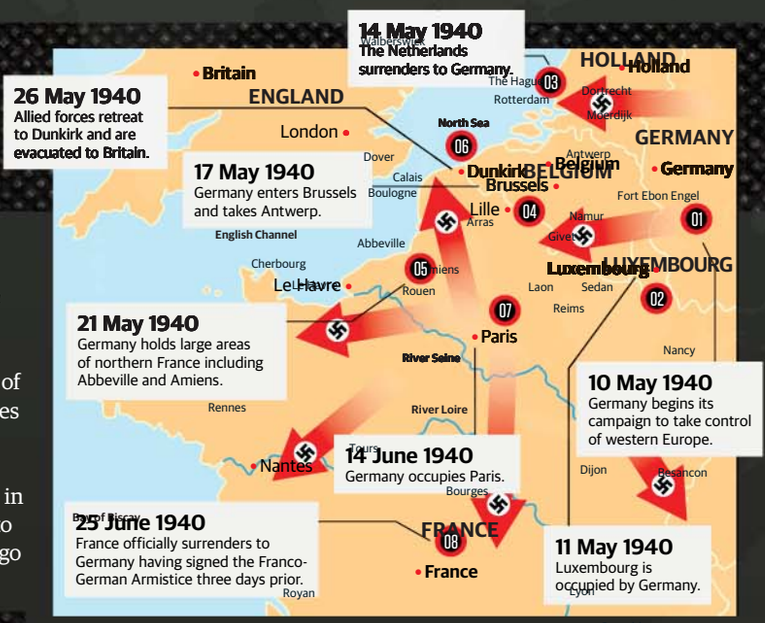
The two major operations were not Hitler's doing. However, it was Hitler that ultimately convinced the German High Command to accept the plan, which undoubtedly was a significant factor in defeating France. The campaign prevented the stalemate that had occurred in World War I, and enabled Germany to begin focusing its attention on other foes.

The expert's view

"Hitler – especially at this stage of the war – was extremely nervous about how it was going to all work out. He was very worried about the left flank of that attack going through the Ardennes to the coast of the English Channel, and he was worried that the French might counterattack. He was [pivotal] in getting the German High Command to accept [Erich von] Manstein's plan to go through the Ardennes."

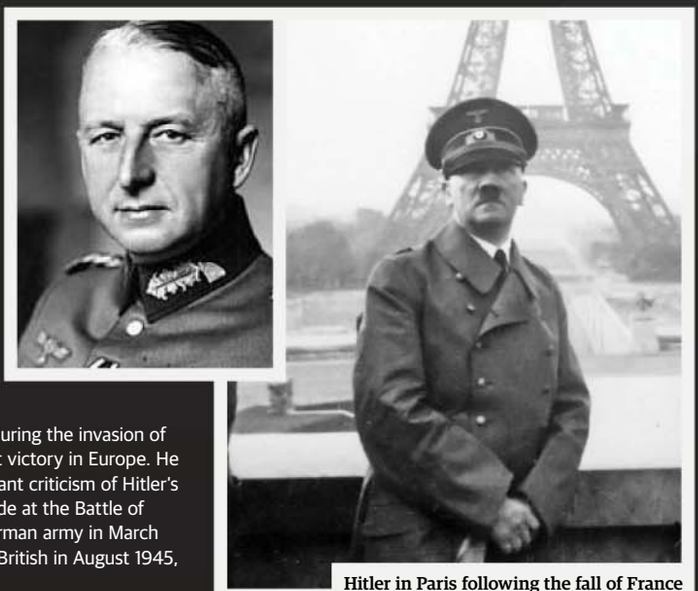
Verdict: Success

"Hitler had a good instinct to go with what Manstein proposed. Hitler was on the right side of that decision."



Who was Erich von Manstein?

Born in Berlin on 24 November 1887, and after seeing service during World War I, Manstein was the chief of staff to Germany's Army Group South at the start of World War II. He was one of the main instigators of an offensive through the Ardennes (known as Case Yellow or Fall Gelb) during the invasion of France in 1940, which ensured Germany a swift victory in Europe. He later attained the rank of general, but his constant criticism of Hitler's strategies coupled with his failure to turn the tide at the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942 saw him ousted from the German army in March 1944. He was captured and imprisoned by the British in August 1945, and died almost 30 years later on 9 June 1973.



Hitler in Paris following the fall of France

▶many trucks a particular unit has at its disposal, that's just ridiculous for a head of state to try to interpret as a military commander. There's no way that he can understand the situation well enough to an extent that it's going to make a positive difference on the battlefield." Such was the extent of his incessant attention for detail that by the end of the war almost no major unit was allowed to move without Hitler's express permission – especially one on the retreat.

Aside from Hitler's over-reliance on details, as the war dragged on he began to rely more and more upon his instincts, and "there were times that served him well, but a lot of times that didn't," Dr Megargee continues. "By [1944] he was sort of living in a fantasy land, frankly; he thought he was going to burst through the Allied lines and separate the British from the Americans and the whole Allied Western coalition would fall apart and he could go back to fighting the Russians [in the east]. By then his instinct had become delusional." At this point in the war Hitler's generals were doing their best to convince him of employing different tactics, such as initiating smaller offensives instead of large ones, but Hitler was having none of it.

For all his shortcomings, though, Hitler did at times make some smart decisions, but embarking on a war at all was a poor one. "The whole war was badly conceived to begin with. ▶



The Battle of the Atlantic

3 September 1939 – 8 May 1945

For all his inexperience in ground warfare, Hitler was even more of a novice when it came to the sea. He didn't have any considerable knowledge of navies, and thus for the most part he left naval operations in the hands of generals he trusted including Erich Raeder and Karl Dönitz, who both served as commander-in-chief of the Kriegsmarine during the war.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest military campaign of World War II, running continuously from the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939 to 8 May 1945. The majority of the campaign was fought between the Kriegsmarine and the combined Allied navies of Britain and Canada, and later in 1941 the US. The Germans relied considerably on their U-boat submarines, with only a handful of warships available.

The campaign revolved largely around the Allied blockade of Germany and a subsequent counter-blockade by the Kriegsmarine. German U-boats attempted to attack convoy ships travelling across the Atlantic, but the strength of the Allied navies, combined with Hitler's decision to pull many U-boats away for other campaigns, would see the Allies gain control of the Atlantic and the Channel by 1944.

The expert's view

"Hitler was involved in some key decisions, especially to take U-boats away from the Atlantic and send them to Norway and the Mediterranean. One probably can't argue that those decisions weakened the Atlantic campaign fatally, but they certainly didn't help it."

Verdict: Failure

"Hitler's on-again, off-again decisions regarding resources for the construction of U-boats did hurt the [campaign] considerably."





The British Royal Navy battleship HMS Barham explodes as her 38cm (15in) magazine ignites



Officers on a destroyer, escorting a large convoy of ships, keep a lookout for enemy submarines in 1941

Key moments in World War II

1939

Outbreak of WWII
Hitler invades Poland and, two days later, Britain and France declare war on Germany, heralding the start of World War II.
1 September 1939

Atlantic warfare
For almost six years the longest military campaign of WWII sees the Allied and Axis powers fight for control of the Atlantic.
3 September 1939

Blitzkrieg strikes
Germany takes control of large portions of western Europe, including Belgium, culminating in the surrender of France.
25 June 1940

Luftwaffe air raids
The German Luftwaffe begins an air campaign against the UK, but the Royal Air Force (RAF) stands strong and is victorious almost four months later.
10 July 1940

The Battle of Britain

10 July – 31 October 1940

With France defeated with surprising swiftness, Hitler was unsure what to do next. The German High Command had been especially unconvinced that France would fall in such a short amount of time, and thus they set about deciding what Germany's next course of action should be.

Hitler was all too aware that Britain posed a significant threat and, with little chance of a diplomatic resolution, he would have to attack. The prospects of a potential invasion of Britain (known as Operation Sealion), however, were incredibly slim. The Royal Navy was far superior to the German Navy (Kriegsmarine), while the Royal Air Force posed a formidable threat in the skies. If an invasion were to happen, the German army wanted to get as many troops ashore as possible, while the Kriegsmarine was adamant that such an operation would be impossible.

With numerous options available, Hitler eventually opted to test out the defensive capabilities of Britain with an attack from the air. If the German Luftwaffe could manage to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force, it could then keep the British Royal Navy at bay while Germany mounted an all-out ground invasion.

Britain, however, proved a much more stubborn opponent than Germany had ever anticipated, and ultimately the RAF was never in too much danger of succumbing to defeat. One of the key factors that affected the outcome was the decision for the Luftwaffe to switch from bombing British military targets and airfields to bombing cities such as London as a terror tactic.

With the Luftwaffe unable to gain air superiority, Hitler postponed Operation Sealion indefinitely in October 1940.

> "The Battle of France is over. The Battle of Britain is about to begin"
>
> **Winston Churchill, 18 June 1940**



About 6,000 Heinkel He 111s were built, but for the most part they were outperformed by British Hurricanes and Spitfires

However, the bombing of civilian Britain continued in what was to become known as the Blitz.

The expert's view

"The popular image is that the RAF was sort of on the ropes when the Germans made the switch [from bombing airfields to cities], and that in effect took the pressure off [Britain]. On the other hand, while the RAF was having a hard time all they really had to do was withdraw a little farther back into the country and husband their resources and they still could have stopped an invasion quite effectively. I don't get the impression the Luftwaffe ever really had a good chance of knocking out the RAF."

Verdict: Failure

"Hitler may have been involved in the decision to go from attacking British airfields and radar stations to bombing London, but this certainly did not help the campaign."



1945

USSR invasion
Germany invades the Soviet Union, reneging on the Non-Aggression Pact that the two countries had signed in 1939.
22 June 1941

Pearl Harbor attack
Japanese fighter planes attack the American base at Pearl Harbor, killing over 2,000 people. Four days later, the USA enters the war.
7 December 1941

D-Day landings
An Allied campaign of over 300,000 soldiers begins landings in Normandy in northern France in order to break Germany's stranglehold on Europe.
6 June 1944

Hitler dies
Hitler commits suicide in his Führerbunker as Germany faces defeat in the Battle of Berlin with the Soviet Union. Germany surrenders six days later.
1 May 1945

Nuclear attack
The US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, killing tens of thousands in an instant. On 2 September Japan surrenders and WWII ends.
6 and 9 August 1945

The invasion of the USSR

22 June 1941 - 24 July 1944

The height of Hitler's involvement with his army came in 1941 when he decided to invade the USSR. Germany's battle with the Red Army began with the five-month-long Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941, and culminated in the Soviets liberating Minsk (Belarus) and Majdanek (Poland) in July 1944.

Hitler and his generals believed that the Soviet Union would fall if Germany mounted a sustained attack. They presumed, somewhat naively, that the Red Army would collapse and the Soviet people would surrender after a short military campaign, allowing Germany to occupy large portions of the USSR while focusing their efforts on Britain in the west. This, of course, was anything but what really happened, and Hitler's underestimation of the Soviet Union was a major failing of the entire campaign.

Hitler held a great number of debates in Barbarossa itself regarding the direction of the main attack: whether it should go to Moscow or into the Ukraine and up through Leningrad. Hitler ultimately made the choice to focus on the economic resources of the Soviet Union rather than the capital. Hitler had good instincts in this regard, but the overall decision to attack the Soviet Union was a poor one.

The Soviets refused to 'roll over' the way the Germans had expected them to, and while Hitler's direction of the campaign in the summer of 1941 was adequate, his refusal to heed the advice of his generals as the invasion dragged on was a major flaw on his part.

Germany's Blitzkrieg tactics that had been so successful earlier in the war were nullified by the Red Army's tactic of holding back before launching counteroffensives. In December 1941 Germany was at the gates of Moscow, but the Soviets kept attacking and wore the Germans down. With winter approaching, many of Hitler's generals suggested the German army should retreat and consolidate before attacking again in spring 1942. Hitler, though, was adamant the army should hold everywhere to ensure they didn't lose any of their heavy equipment, which he came under much criticism for. His decision was arguably the right one at first, but later in the war he became too enamoured with the technique.

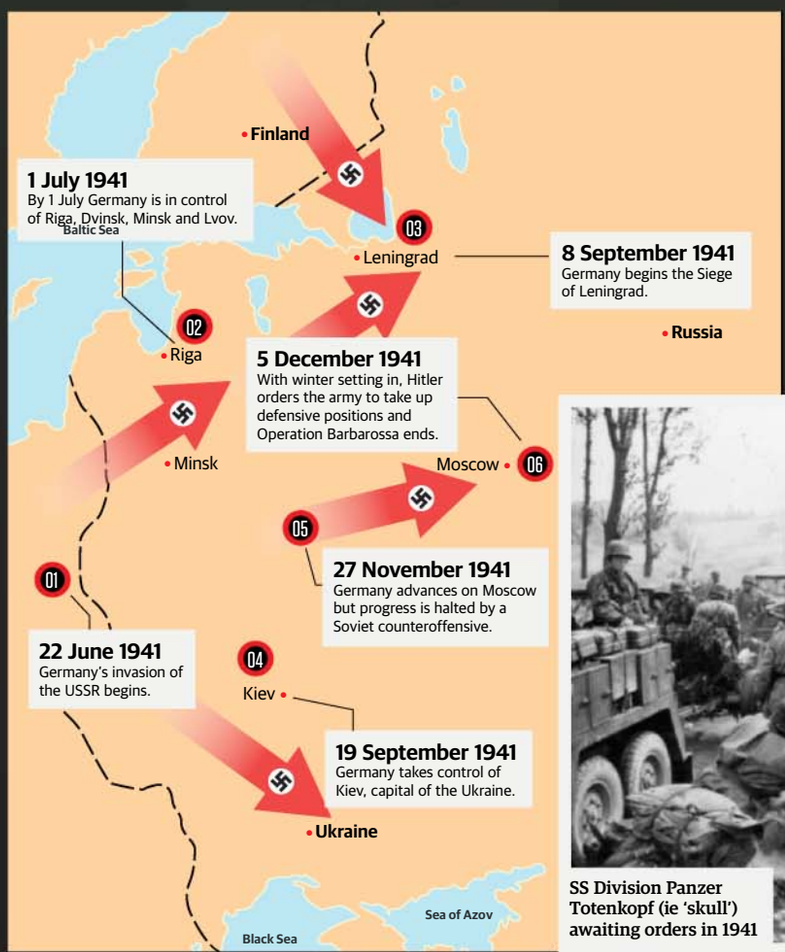
With their first attempt at defeating the Soviet Union unsuccessful, Germany would try again before the war was out. Hitler and his generals were convinced the Red Army was on the ropes, and sustained attacks would wear them out. But the Russians stood strong and, after successfully defending key cities including Moscow in 1942, Hitler was left with few options but retreat.

The expert's view

"The genocide of the Jews and the general abuse and destruction of the Soviet population really made it impossible to come to any kind of arrangement with the Soviet people. There's an argument to be made that if the Germans had gone in with a different attitude they could have [tempted] Ukraine and the Baltic states, and perhaps other portions of the Soviet Union, away. But Hitler assumed they were going to have a quick military victory and saw no reason to compromise. He convinced himself that the Red Army must be on the ropes, and they kept pushing in the winter, still trying to take Moscow and still trying to advance in the south, and they ran out of steam. As a result, Germany found itself in the middle of winter without the proper equipment, with no place to go, and vulnerable to the Soviet counteroffensive."

Verdict: Failure

"If you ignore the bad decision of attacking the USSR to begin with, on an operational level Hitler did fairly well [at first, but he lost his way]."









SS Division Panzer Totenkopf (ie 'skull') awaiting orders in 1941





German troops moving into Russian territory in armoured vehicles in June 1941



Hitler poses with his senior officers and generals in June 1940



A soldier defending the German line with an MG 34 machine gun



To start with Germany made good progress into Russia, but the tide began to turn as winter set in

"By 1945 Hitler was all but dictating to his generals exactly what to do, and he had little trust left in any of them"

▶The idea that Germany could take on the British Empire, the Soviet Union and then the US at the same time was at the very least problematic. I've had people ask me when do I consider the war to have been lost, and I semi-jokingly say, '1 September 1939'."

With the hand Hitler had been dealt – or rather the hand he had dealt himself – he managed to conduct himself, and the army, in a reasonable manner at the start of the conflict.

The invasion of Poland was arguably his only course of action once the wheels of war had been set in motion, and the manner in which Germany conquered not only Poland but other nations, such as France, was commendable; they had swiftly and effectively seized control of a large chunk of Europe, thanks to Hitler's belief that France could be beaten. What he didn't count on, however, was the steadfast refusal of Britain to enter into any sort of diplomatic negotiations.

"With Britain not giving up his options were becoming extremely limited. He was in an economic bind; he was not going to be able to continue this war over the long run against the British because, sooner or later, Germany was going to run out of strength for that – even with the tentative support of the Soviet Union.

"So he made the decision for strategic and economic and ideological reasons to attack the Soviet Union – something he was more or less intending to do all along anyway. That decision was based on the assumption – which his generals shared and backed – that the USSR would collapse – that there would be one short military campaign which would destroy the Red Army. Obviously that didn't work out very well."

Indeed, the war came to a point in 1941 where defeat for Germany seemed all but inevitable and Hitler's strategic choices became ever-more limited. By 1942, after a second attempt at defeating the Soviet Union had failed, Dr Megargee suggests that, for Hitler, it became "just a matter of holding out as best he could in the hope that the Allied coalition would break up. And it became more based on delusion than anything else."

By 1945 Hitler was all but dictating to his generals exactly what to do, and he had little trust left in any of them. But by then, and possibly even much earlier, for all the strategic knowledge in the world, Hitler had no hope of leading the Third Reich to victory. "I think quite honestly his biggest strategic mistake was starting the war.

"Beyond that you get into details, and there are arguments to be made for each of the strategic decisions he made after that – declaring war on the Soviet Union and the United States, for example – but that's all within the context of a war in which Germany was, I won't say fated to lose, but certainly was not going to win easily."

Hitler's deterioration from sanity to irrationality, therefore, was not the deciding factor in the war, however there can be little doubt that his leadership style did little to help what was already a difficult cause for Germany.

Perhaps even with the greatest generals in the world the Third Reich would have been defeated; of that we cannot be certain. What we do know, however, was that Hitler was not the great military leader he himself thought he was. For his handful of victories there was a truckload of defeats, and his refusal to listen to reason ultimately accelerated Nazi Germany down the path to defeat.

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20 History myths BUSTED

Think you know your history? Much of it might not actually be true...

Written by Jonathan Hatfull & Tim Williamson

1922-1943

MUSSOLINI MADE THE TRAINS RUN ON TIME

How fascist propaganda built a myth of perfect commuting

As far as defences of fascist dictators go, "Yes, but he made the trains run on time" has to be one of the most strangely humdrum. Perhaps that's why it so often goes unchallenged, but it's simply not true. There are many reports that the Italian train system during Mussolini's reign was actually quite inefficient, with people often kept waiting for trains that sometimes never came. So how did this rumour come about?

Well, because fascist dictators know a thing or two about propaganda. The train system had certainly improved but it was far from perfect. What's more, the improvements had started *before* Mussolini assumed power in 1922, but Il Duce was more than happy to take credit for it. He knew the importance of spreading an impression of a country that ran like clockwork and the supposedly perfect train system was a great example. What we can say is, "Yes, but he did build the striking Milan train station."

Origins

Desperate to show that Italy had been transformed into a smoothly running machine under his dictatorship (both to the country's inhabitants and to the rest of the world), Benito Mussolini took credit for the improvements to the train system that had already began before he took power. In reality, he had little to do with it and they still didn't run on time.



Mussolini's propaganda spread rumours like the trains running on time to create the illusion that Italy was prospering under his rule

A KNIGHT NEEDED A CRANE TO MOUNT HIS HORSE

CIRCA 13TH-14TH CENTURIES

While protecting the wearer, medieval suits of armour also had to be lightweight in order to grant the knight flexibility when riding and in battle. Armoured suits greatly ranged in design but generally weighed around 27kg (60lb), which would not have hindered the wearer from mounting his steed unaided.



The Salem trials, which lasted several months, saw the executions of 20 people along with two dogs who were thought to be accomplices

WITCHES WERE BURNED AT SALEM

1692

Of all the men and women found guilty of witchcraft in Salem, MA, 19 were executed by hanging, one was crushed by stones, but no one was burned at the stake. Though burning was an official form of execution in parts of Europe, by the end of the 17th century the practice was far less common.

NERO FIDDLED WHILE ROME BURNED

64 CE

Emperor Nero could not possibly have played the fiddle while his capital city burned down, as violin-style instruments weren't invented until several hundred years later. In fact, Nero was not even in the city when the fire started and he hurried back to Rome to take personal control of efforts to put out the inferno.



Nero was held responsible for the burning of Rome, so executed scores of Christians - then a relatively small religious group - as scapegoats



Gladiatorial fights could be ended in many ways, including the death of the loser whose fate was nearly always left up to the spectators

THUMBS-UP MEANT MERCY FOR A GLADIATOR

3RD CENTURY BCE-5TH CENTURY CE

There was a range of different ways Roman crowds called for either the sparing or death of a fallen gladiator. Though a thumbs-up signal could have been used, it more likely represented death than mercy, symbolising the suspended sword of the victor. A thumb pressed to the heart is also thought to have been used to call for death.



ANNE BOLEYN HAD SIX FINGERS

CIRCA 1501-1536

It's highly unlikely that Henry VIII would have chosen a woman with such an obvious deformity to be his queen and there's no evidence to suggest that Anne Boleyn had any more digits than the usual ten. She had many enemies at court who spread similarly malicious rumours, some of which would eventually lead to her execution.

Feminists burned their bras in the Sixties 1968

There are no records of feminist activists burning their bras as an act of protest, though this myth endures as an icon of the movement. At a picket of the 1968 Miss America pageant, hundreds of feminist activists intended to burn a stack of feminine objects, but were stopped by the police.

ROMANS VOMITED DURING FEASTS

8TH CENTURY BCE-5TH CENTURY CE

Given the name, you'd be forgiven for thinking that a vomitorium served an obvious, if unpleasant, purpose for the Ancient Romans. However, this was nothing more than a large passageway through which people entered or exited an amphitheatre, literally spewing forth from or into the room as the word's connotations suggest.

NAPOLEON WAS SHORT

1769-1821

Napoleon Bonaparte was in fact average or above-average height for the time, measuring around 1.7 metres (5.7 feet) at the time of his death. This confusion is often put down to French inches being larger than British inches in the period, as well as some elements of the British press being keen to belittle the French emperor – quite literally.

GEORGE WASHINGTON HAD WOODEN TEETH

1732-1799

Washington did wear sets of false teeth during his life, but they were actually constructed out of more practical materials, such as lead or ivory. Rumours the founding father wore a wooden set could have emerged due to the gradual discolouration of the dentures, which he had to frequently maintain.

300 SPARTANS HELD BACK THE PERSIANS AT THERMOPYLAE

480 BCE

The Battle of Thermopylae is perhaps the most famous against-all-odds encounter of all time. However, although King Leonidas is famed for withstanding the Persian invaders with a mere 300 soldiers, records show a far larger number of Greeks – ie 6,000-7,000 – took part in the battle.



Marie Antoinette was a popular regal figure for a short while, but opinion soon turned as her lifestyle stood in sharp contrast with France's suffering

1755-1789

"LET THEM EAT CAKE"

Marie Antoinette lost her head in the Revolution, but did she utter those famous words?

As France inched ever closer to the brink of revolution, the royal family were perceived as being utterly clueless and indifferent to the suffering of their people. So much so that the French queen, Marie Antoinette – renowned for her style and notorious for her profligate spending – is supposed to have replied to news of the workers' lack of bread with the immortal words, "Let them eat cake."

But this never happened. From rumours of treachery to promiscuity, Marie Antoinette has long been the victim of bad press. The evidence shows the queen was not dismissive of her subjects' suffering but keenly aware of it. Not enough to alter the way she lived, mind you, but she donated to charitable causes and wrote many letters urging her fellows to find a solution to the hardships faced by the vast majority of the population. However, the public had turned against Marie Antoinette, as her lavish lifestyle stood in sharp relief to a nation that was in dire poverty.

The first instance of the famous phrase was worded differently, but was indeed spoken by a member of the French royal court – albeit one who died close to a century before Marie Antoinette was supposed to have uttered it. Marie-Thérèse, the wife of Louis XIV, was reputed to have said, "Let them eat the crust of the pâté" (la croûte de pâté). The phrase was repeated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the philosopher and author of such works as *The Social Contract*, in his autobiography *Confessions*, which he began writing in 1764, when Marie Antoinette was just nine. Rousseau wrote about a 'great princess' who was told that the peasants had no bread and replied, "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche."

The statement remains most popularly attributed to Marie Antoinette despite the facts to the contrary, perhaps because it perfectly encapsulates the perception of the spoiled woman who was representative of an unfair class system which was on the verge of being brutally turned on its head.

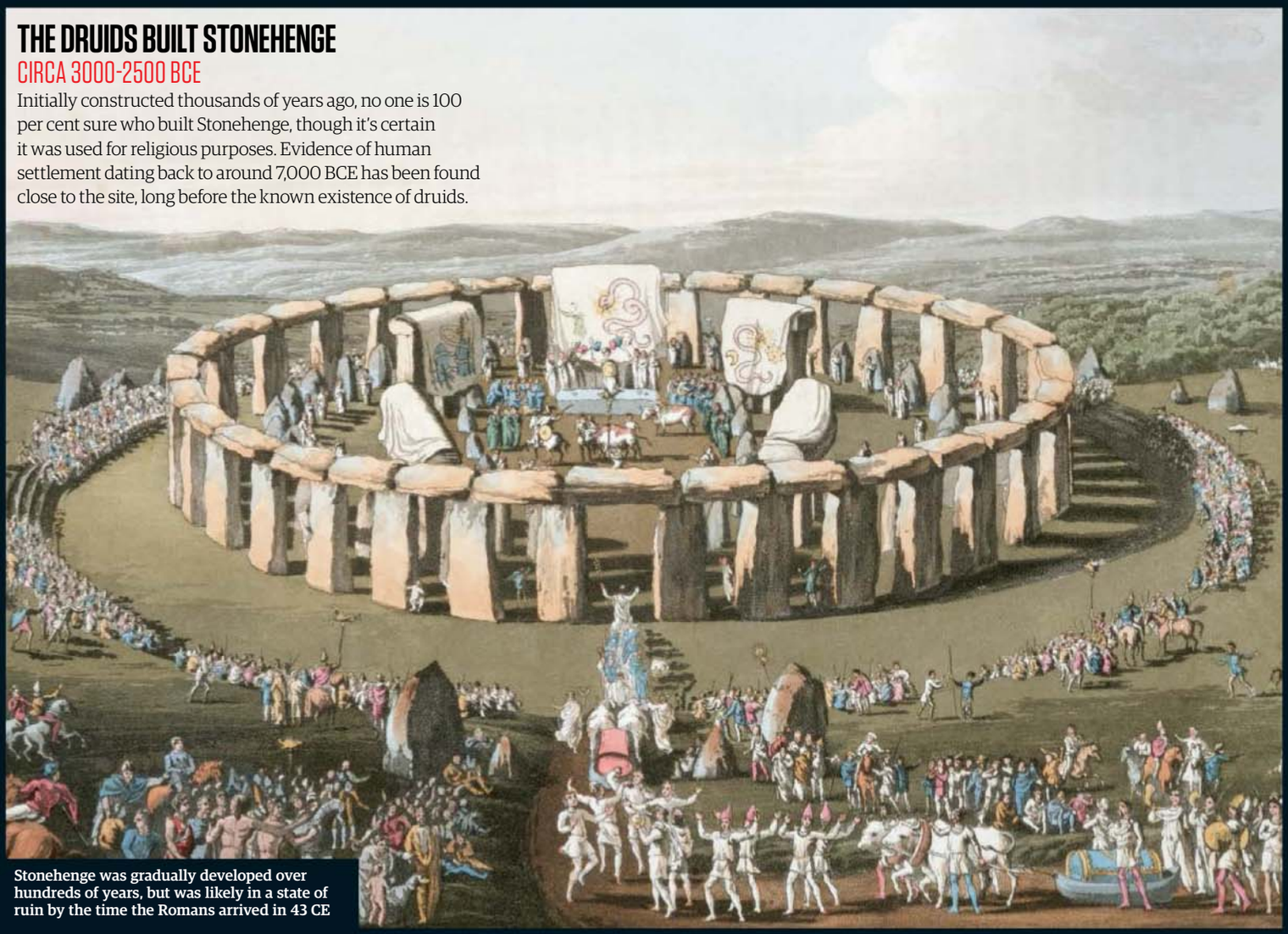
Origins

Allegedly a retort to a message that the workers had no bread, "Let them eat cake" is a catchy riposte that actually was first used nearly 100 years before Marie Antoinette lost her head. The philosopher Rousseau attributed it to 'a great princess' and the false assumption was made and has stuck ever since.

THE DRUIDS BUILT STONEHENGE

CIRCA 3000-2500 BCE

Initially constructed thousands of years ago, no one is 100 per cent sure who built Stonehenge, though it's certain it was used for religious purposes. Evidence of human settlement dating back to around 7,000 BCE has been found close to the site, long before the known existence of druids.



Stonehenge was gradually developed over hundreds of years, but was likely in a state of ruin by the time the Romans arrived in 43 CE

STOCKBROKERS JUMPED FROM THE WINDOWS IN THE WALL STREET CRASH

1929

Only two fatal jumps took place on Wall Street in 1929 in the two months after the Crash, which heralded the beginning of the Great Depression. Many rumours of market speculators falling to their deaths were merely press sensationalism. Though many related suicides did occur in the following months and years, they were by various methods and in different parts of the USA.





LADY GODIVA RODE NAKED THROUGH COVENTRY

11TH CENTURY CE

It may be the most famous act of public nudity, but there's no reason to believe Lady Godiva's nude trip took place. Though she died in the mid-11th century, accounts of her ride didn't surface until some 200 years later, casting serious doubt over its veracity.

JFK said: "I am a jelly doughnut" in Berlin

26 June 1963

John F Kennedy's proud statement "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner") is commonly believed to have been a mistake, referring to the Berliner doughnut in Germany. However, Kennedy's inclusion of the word 'ein' was intended to give a more figurative rather than literal edge to his statement and is grammatically sound.



VAN GOGH SLICED OFF HIS EAR

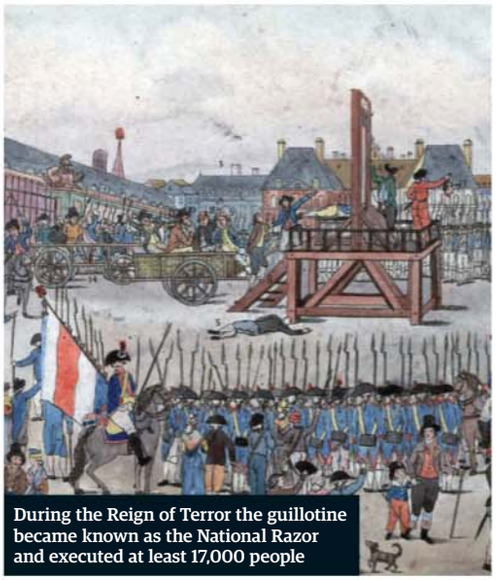
1888

As well as his iconic paintings, Vincent van Gogh is famous for cutting off one of his ears. In fact, he only cut off a portion of his ear lobe, but went on to suffer a period of mental turmoil afterwards. It was during this time that he painted one of his most famous masterpieces, *The Starry Night*.

DR GUILLOTIN INVENTED GUILLOTINES

1789

Despite lending his name to a new model of the decapatation device, Dr Joseph Guillotin was not the machine's inventor, with one in Ireland dating back as early as 1307 CE. In fact, Dr Guillotin wanted to banish the death penalty and, in the meantime, was fighting for more humane forms of execution when he designed his guillotine.



During the Reign of Terror the guillotine became known as the National Razor and executed at least 17,000 people



CIRCA 2500 BCE

SLAVES BUILT THE PYRAMIDS

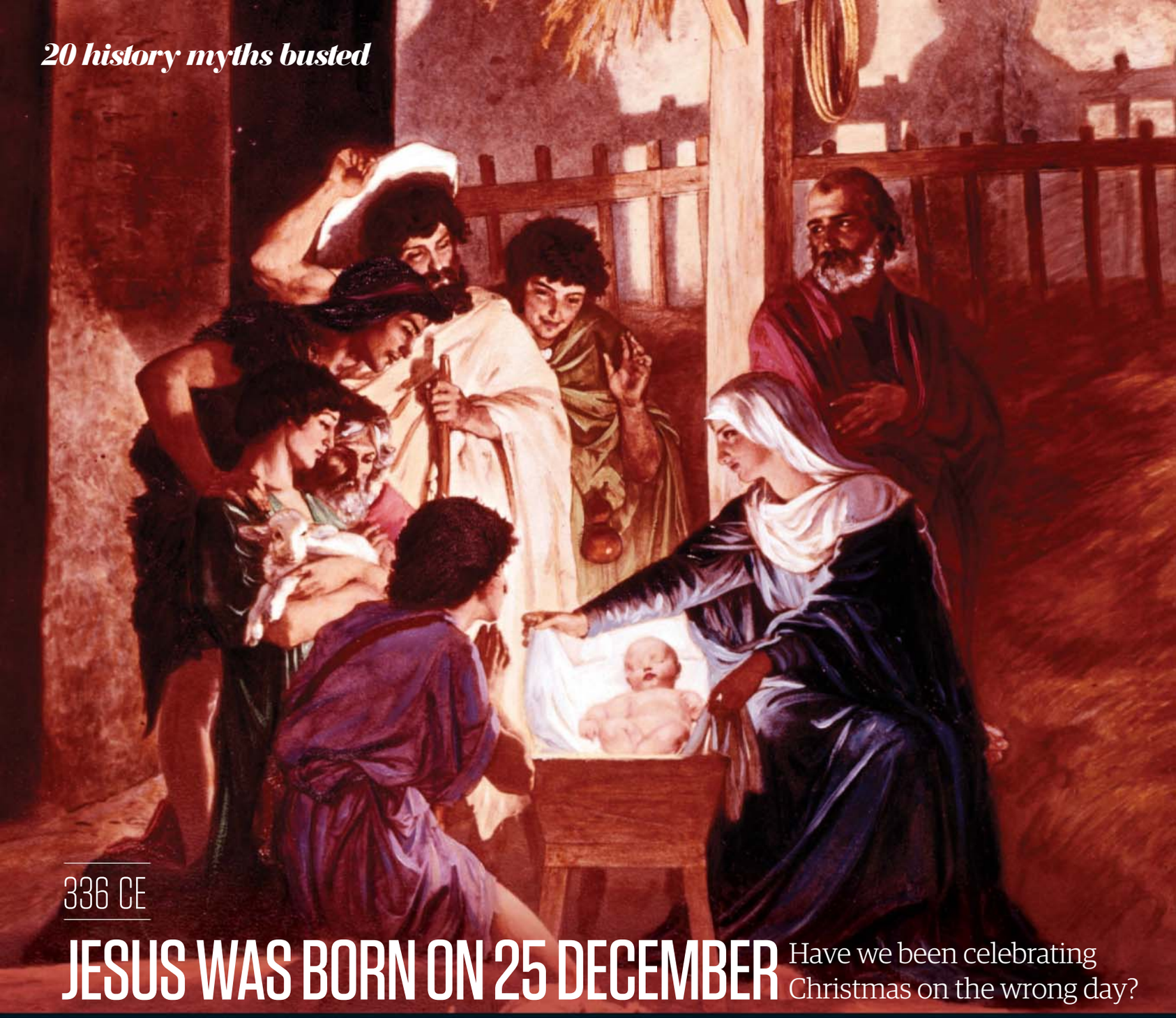
We all know the pyramids were built with slave labour – weren't they?

The pyramids are one of the most staggering achievements of architecture and engineering. Many believed Greek historian Herodotus's claim in 450 BCE that they were built by 100,000 unpaid Israelite workers, forced into astounding feats by the cruel pharaohs and their slave drivers. But, in fact, the men who built the pyramids were not from Israel, nor were they slaves; they were labourers from Egypt.

While many historians have believed the slaves story to be nothing but a popular myth for some time, it wasn't conclusively debunked until 2010, when a team of Egyptian archaeologists uncovered tombs of the men who died while constructing the pyramids. The fact that they were given a ceremonial burial shows that they were afforded much more respect than slaves would have received, although the condition of their bones shows that they had a short life span and suffered from arthritis due to the back-breaking nature of their work.

Origins

It's a falsehood that has been around for a long time. Herodotus perpetuated it when he wrote about his visit to Egypt in 450 BCE; the Book of Exodus refers to Israelites building works for the pharaoh; and Menachem Begin, the former Israeli prime minister, claimed that pyramids were built by Israelite slaves when he visited Egypt in 1977.



336 CE

JESUS WAS BORN ON 25 DECEMBER

Have we been celebrating Christmas on the wrong day?

Any study of the life of Jesus is bound to be contentious, raising a multitude of questions before any progress has been made, but there is evidence to suggest that he did once live and that he was crucified by the Roman prefect of Judaea, Pontius Pilate. Things become more clouded, historically speaking, when we attempt to pin down the precise dates of his life.

Because although we can be fairly confident in saying he lived and died, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that 25 December is anything more than another day in the calendar. Even the recently retired Pope Benedict XVI has disputed the exact birth date of Christ, suggesting that the sixth-century monk Dionysius Exiguus may have made an error in his calculations.

The Pope agreed with the popular belief that Jesus was, in fact, born between six and four BCE. While we can make an approximation of the year of Jesus's birth, pinning down the day proves somewhat more difficult. This is because the Bible does not provide any dates for this event – or even a season. The closest thing to a clue we get is the shepherds tending their flocks by night, which suggests that the weather is cold.

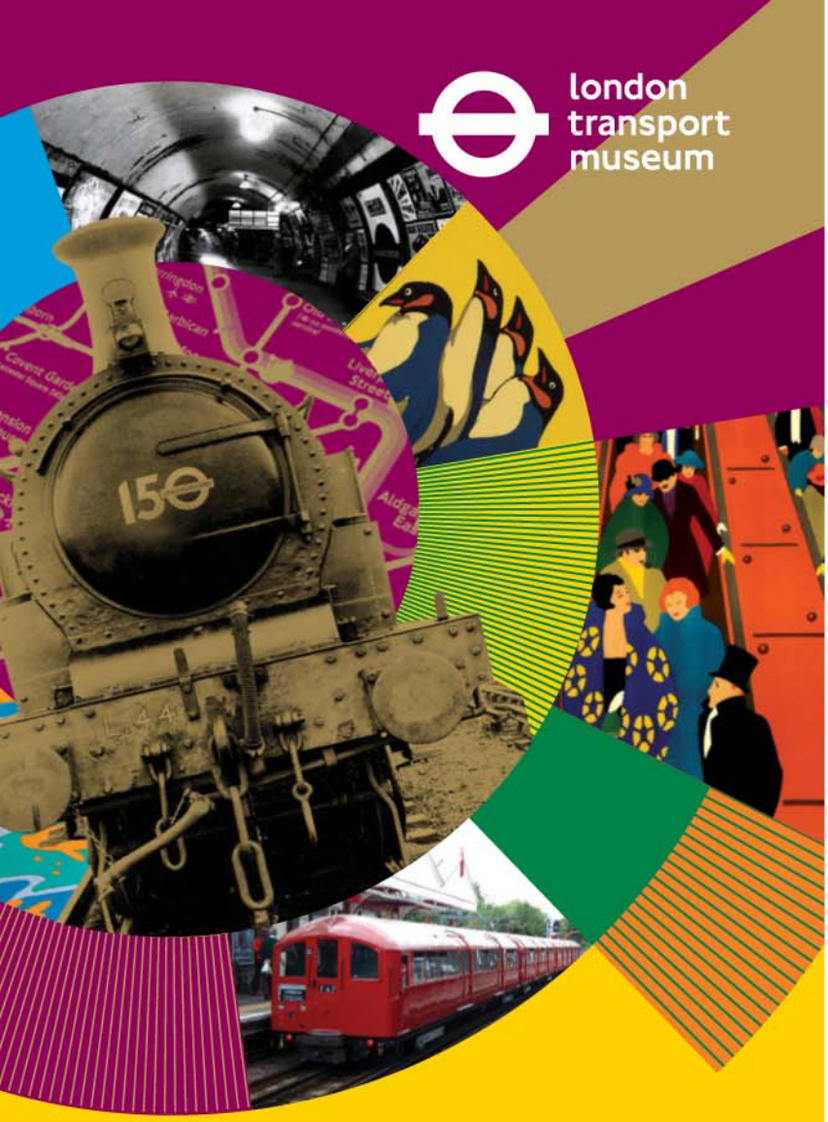
The decision to anoint 25 December as Christ's birthday stems from around 300 CE, when Christianity was still trying to establish itself as the dominant religion in the Roman Empire.

The Christian leaders observed the popularity of the pagan rituals and realised they needed to create their own annual celebration. The appointed date of Christmas is extremely close to the pagan celebration of Yule, which occurs on 21 December, and directly overlaps with the Roman festival of Saturnalia and the Iranian celebration of the birth of Mithras, the Sun of Righteousness. After some debate about whether the day should be glorified at all, the first celebration of Christ's birth took place in Rome in 336 CE.

Origins

Church leaders needed to combat the popularity of pagan rituals that were still rife throughout the Roman Empire, so they decided to create their own celebration. In 336 CE it was finally agreed that 25 December would be appointed as the day Christ was born.

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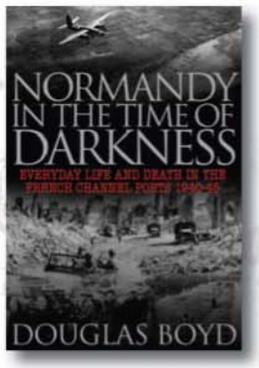
London Transport Museum celebrates the past, present and future of London Underground

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Everyday Life and Death in the French Channel Ports 1940-45

Douglas Boyd



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MARK ANTONY

Rome/Egypt, 83-30 BCE

Brief Bio

Marcus Antonius was born in 83 BCE and, as a young man, was known as something of a playboy in Rome. But after fighting alongside Julius Caesar on the battlefield, he quickly established his military prowess. After Caesar's assassination, he formed a power trio with Marcus Lepidus and Octavian, but his growing love of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra would prove to be his downfall.

CLEOPATRA VII

Egypt, circa 69-30 BCE

Brief Bio

Cleopatra was the daughter of Ptolemy XII Auletes and Cleopatra V. Born in Alexandria in 69 BCE her bloodline propagated a series of brother-sister marriages that were frequently corroded by family violence and murder. After a tumultuous reign, Octavian of Rome invaded Egypt and ended her rule. Rather than face the humiliation of defeat, Cleopatra committed suicide.

THE LAST PHARAOH AND THE FALL OF ANCIENT EGYPT

Written by Bridget McDermott

Cleopatra VII remains an icon of both the ancient and modern world. Today, she continues to captivate and puzzle historians, remaining one of history's most enchanting and enigmatic figures.

The alliance of Mark Antony and Cleopatra changed the face of the world. A coalition which began as a political statement soon evolved into a tumultuous, and later tragic, love affair.

Despite her florid reputation, Cleopatra took only two lovers – both were rulers of Rome. Cleopatra recognised Rome as the leading power of the ancient world. Egypt, rich in gold and grain, provided the material resources to fuel that power. Both affairs had begun with a political agenda. They had enabled the queen to establish a secure and profitable union between Rome and Egypt. Despite this, however, events took an unexpected turn when she met the younger general. Cleopatra and Mark Antony fell in love, embarking on a passionate and unpredictable relationship that brought both riches and remorse. Their partnership, as lovers and politicians, both immortalised and destroyed a dynasty – it brought to a close 3,000 years of pharaonic rule.

Long before her meeting with Mark Antony, the queen had borne a child to her first Roman lover, Gaius Julius Caesar and she had named the child Caesarion – 'little Caesar'. In doing so, Cleopatra had secured for herself an enormous power base, for Caesar had no heir. Despite its material wealth, Egypt had suffered years of famine that had weakened the reserves of her granaries and her people. The country was in eclipse. Her allied states had also felt the grip of Rome tightening around

> In 30 BCE, a love affair between a powerful queen and a respected military leader caused scandal in Rome and ultimately brought about the end of a royal dynasty

their throats. Alexandria had long been important to Rome. As a gateway to the East, it was a major port with a large cosmopolitan community. It was renowned for its libraries, culture and trade. Egypt also had an abundant source of grain with which it fed its imperial army. On the other hand, the Romans regarded the Egyptian people and their religion with suspicion – its cults, along with its strange animal-headed gods, were an abomination to the refined Roman senses.

While her alliance with Rome continued, Cleopatra – and her throne – remained secure. For this reason, Cleopatra courted Rome and its leading figures. From the beginning, Cleopatra was an enigma to a man like Mark Antony. Having grown up in Rome, he was familiar with upper-class women who were cloistered in the home and whose only role in life was to be that of good wives and mothers. The women of Rome were largely regarded as vessels of chastity; Cleopatra was the antithesis of a Roman woman.

Growing up in a highly political and dangerous household where life was precarious, she was descended from a long line of rulers – all named Ptolemy – who could trace their line to Alexander the Great. In order to keep their bloodline pure, female rulers often married their brothers. This practice brought outward strength but inner conflicts; during her early life Cleopatra witnessed brutal power struggles within her own family. Indeed, as her power grew, she had no choice but to execute her rival siblings.

Cleopatra had to live by her wits. She was a highly educated woman with a sharp mind and a keen instinct. She spoke several languages, including Egyptian – making her unique among her peers. She was a cultivated woman, a patron of the arts and devoted to books. Despite her later reputation as a femme fatale, she was not considered beautiful. It was said she had a charismatic presence, was a fine conversationalist and had a sweet, seductive voice – a trait she may have cultivated as a child. Most importantly, Cleopatra was a survivor; she knew that in order to sustain her throne, she needed to control the might of Rome, and Mark Antony could offer this.

Mark Antony and Cleopatra were as fire and water. Born in January 83 BCE, Antony was a true son of Rome. Like Cleopatra, he sought decadence and danger – he had quickly gained a reputation for drinking and gambling, and seems to have been attracted to exotic religious cults. Later, he earned fame and fortune among the militia; as the commander of a cavalry regiment he received great honours fighting with Caesar's armies in Gaul. Antony and Caesar formed a mutual friendship and a distant kinship had strengthened their alliance. As Caesar's star ascended, so too had Mark

Antony's, and when the elder man became dictator, Antony was appointed Magister Equitum (Master of the Horse) and governed Rome in Caesar's absence. Better suited to the battlefield, Mark Antony made an impetuous politician – highly volatile, his excesses in wine and women became the topic of much public gossip, for these often included affairs with other men's wives.

After the assassination of Caesar, Cleopatra and Mark Antony fled Rome and Cleopatra returned to Egypt. With Caesar dead, her position had become tenuous. The Romans regarded a female ruler with abhorrence and she desperately needed an ally in the Senate. When revolt failed to materialise, Mark Antony returned to the Forum to find a city outraged at the atrocities that had befallen Caesar.

The assassins were executed or fell into obscurity, and it was left to Octavian (Caesar's appointed heir), Lepidus (his trusted commander) and Mark Antony to calm the storm. The three men formed the Second Triumvirate granting themselves equal powers of government.

Antony was now in a strong position. As the three men began to carve out Roman territory each assigned themselves important provinces. Mark Antony had set his heart on Cleopatra and Egypt. He sent a message to his lover asking her to meet him at Tarsus in modern-day Turkey, determined to win her support for his military campaigns.

On this particular meeting she presented herself as the embodiment of the goddess Venus. The imperial queen of Egypt arrived on a golden barge; decked in fine linen and precious gems, she was attended by servants dressed as sea nymphs. While she drifted towards Mark Antony like a creature from myth, she refused to disembark. As queen of Egypt, she expected Antony to wait on her.

Mark Antony's temper was inflamed, but so were his passions. Plutarch said of their relationship "observing Cleopatra's looks and her subtlety and tricky wit in conversation, he [Antony's agent] at once knew that Antony would never think of doing such a woman any harm, and that in fact she'd have the greatest influence over him."

Not surprisingly, Antony chose to spend the winter of 41–40 BCE with Cleopatra in Alexandria – the result of this visit was the birth of twin children, Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene II, whose names are linked with the dual powers of the Sun and the Moon.

Rome was greatly disturbed by this turn of events. In order to secure his loyalty, Octavian arranged a marriage between Mark Antony and his sister, Octavia – a move that infuriated the Egyptian queen. To avoid a public insult, Mark Antony stumbled into an acrimonious and dangerous union. Meanwhile, the queen of Egypt financed his army, allowing him to capture Jerusalem where he installed Herod as the puppet king of Judaea. Four years later, Antony visited Alexandria again en route to make war with the Parthians. His relationship with Cleopatra had gathered momentum and he had made Alexandria his home. Despite his union with Octavia, he married Cleopatra and they had another child.

Soon, Antony grew tired of luxurious living, exotic palaces and hunting in the Egyptian Delta; he longed for the glories of war. When Antony invaded Parthian territory with an army of about 100,000 Roman and allied troops, the campaign proved disastrous. He never recovered from the shock of defeat. Octavian took this opportunity; he demoted Lepidus, belittled Mark Antony and seized unilateral power. He reminded Rome of the menacing relationship between Antony and his abominable foreign queen. While feigning shock at the abandonment of his sister, he told the citizens of Rome that Mark Antony was now living as an Egyptian; this was regarded as an act of treason.

Antony and Cleopatra responded to the attack with theatrics. After a successful invasion of Armenia, Mark Antony infuriated his fellow Romans by holding a Triumph (formal celebration) in the city of Alexandria. Mark Antony then issued a series of proclamations known as the Donations of Alexandria when he named Cleopatra and her

"Octavian arranged a marriage between Mark Antony and his sister, Octavia – a move that infuriated the Egyptian queen"



A 19th-century depiction of Cleopatra on the River Nile

Myth vs reality

Just how realistic is our modern conception of the Egyptian queen?

A modern reader's perspective of Cleopatra has no doubt been heavily influenced by the numerous works of fiction that have been released charting her life in the many centuries following her death.

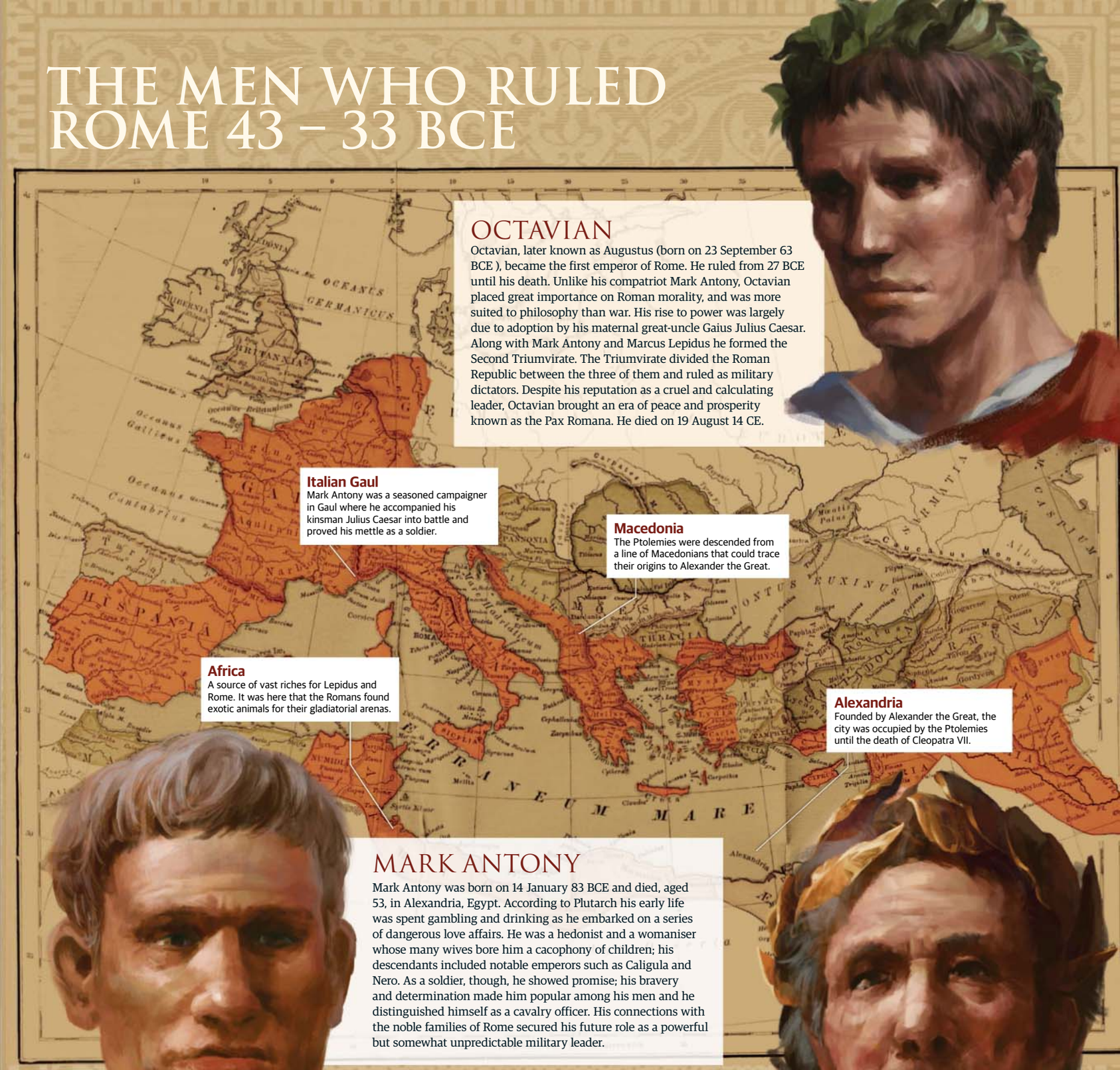
Foremost among these must arguably be William Shakespeare's 1623 tragedy *Antony And Cleopatra*, a play that follows events from the Sicilian revolt of 44 BCE through to the Final War of the Roman Republic in which Cleopatra commits suicide in 30 BCE by asp bite. In this performance, Cleopatra is frequently portrayed as beautiful, power-hungry and manipulative.

So how accurate is Shakespeare's representation of the Egyptian ruler? Well, it is loosely based on a translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* – a series of biographies on famous Greek and Roman men that were printed in a first edition in Florence in the early-16th century (no doubt where Shakespeare picked it up).

The one in question from which the Great Bard draws is the *Life Of Mark Antony*, which is interesting, as it does not deal directly with the pharaoh but rather with the Roman general and his relationship to her. Further, Shakespeare does not lay out events of the time as stated by Plutarch, with dates and events shifted in time and contrasting accounts of Cleopatra simplified. A good example of this is how varying accounts of her death, including death by poisoning, willing death by snake bike to the arm and unwilling accidental snakebite to the arm, is rewritten as willing death by snakebite to the breast.

Of course, Shakespeare's account of Cleopatra has been further embellished in subsequent centuries with other works of fiction such as the well-known 1963 film adaptation of her life with Elizabeth Taylor playing the lead. Aside from Taylor's questionable portrayal, this movie introduced many smaller yet pervasive inaccuracies such as Cleopatra wearing her hair in bangs. In reality, the Egyptian queen would have worn a wig of tight curls on top of her head, which would have been shaven.

THE MEN WHO RULED ROME 43 – 33 BCE



OCTAVIAN

Octavian, later known as Augustus (born on 23 September 63 BCE), became the first emperor of Rome. He ruled from 27 BCE until his death. Unlike his compatriot Mark Antony, Octavian placed great importance on Roman morality, and was more suited to philosophy than war. His rise to power was largely due to adoption by his maternal great-uncle Gaius Julius Caesar. Along with Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus he formed the Second Triumvirate. The Triumvirate divided the Roman Republic between the three of them and ruled as military dictators. Despite his reputation as a cruel and calculating leader, Octavian brought an era of peace and prosperity known as the Pax Romana. He died on 19 August 14 CE.

Italian Gaul
Mark Antony was a seasoned campaigner in Gaul where he accompanied his kinsman Julius Caesar into battle and proved his mettle as a soldier.

Macedonia
The Ptolemies were descended from a line of Macedonians that could trace their origins to Alexander the Great.

Africa
A source of vast riches for Lepidus and Rome. It was here that the Romans found exotic animals for their gladiatorial arenas.

Alexandria
Founded by Alexander the Great, the city was occupied by the Ptolemies until the death of Cleopatra VII.

MARK ANTONY

Mark Antony was born on 14 January 83 BCE and died, aged 53, in Alexandria, Egypt. According to Plutarch his early life was spent gambling and drinking as he embarked on a series of dangerous love affairs. He was a hedonist and a womaniser whose many wives bore him a cacophony of children; his descendants included notable emperors such as Caligula and Nero. As a soldier, though, he showed promise; his bravery and determination made him popular among his men and he distinguished himself as a cavalry officer. His connections with the noble families of Rome secured his future role as a powerful but somewhat unpredictable military leader.

MARCUS AEMILIUS LEPIDUS

Lepidus, like Mark Antony, was a fierce advocate of Julius Caesar who gave Lepidus great honorary titles and a role in the Senate that was equivalent to that of a prime minister today. His career was cut short when Caesar was assassinated. In allowing Lepidus to live, Caesar's assassins made an irrevocable error of judgement. Octavian, Antony and Lepidus became the driving force of Rome - their initial aim, to cut off the head of the Senate. After they had executed many of their enemies, their alliance, in effect, heralded the end of the Republic. Lepidus ruled over Spain and Africa and, while he was abroad, Octavian began his quest for ultimate power. He forced Lepidus into exile in Circeii, Italy, where he died as an old man around 13 BCE.

Actium

The ancient battle that changed the world

The battle took place on 2 September 31 BCE, on the Ionian Sea on the border of the city of Actium. It was thought that Antony's fleet had the advantage. It boasted 500 ships – each a war galley designed with turrets. Known as quinqueremes, Mark Antony's warships each weighed 300 tons; they were especially designed to ram enemy vessels.

Commanded by his general, Marcus Agrippa, Octavian's fleet consisted of 250 ships. Agrippa launched his initial attack from the left wing of the fleet and attempted to outflank Mark Antony – the battle was brutal and prolonged. Unfortunately, many of Antony's soldiers were dying of malaria and his ships were undermanned. Therefore, Octavian's fleet was greatly encouraged. These Liburnian vessels were manned by well-trained and rested soldiers, and the ships were fast and agile. As they outmanoeuvred their enemy, the deck soldiers used fire arrows and slingshots to diminish their capability. Realising the severity of his situation, Mark Antony decided to retreat and regroup. He took advantage of a break in the enemy formation and made a dash for it. In doing so, he abandoned many of his men to their fate.



Defeated by Octavian's fleet, Mark Antony fled the battle, leaving his soldiers to die

children heirs to his conquered territories. It was, in effect, a declaration of war. Mark Antony named Caesarion the legitimate son and heir of Caesar – Octavian, of course, being the 'adopted' son of the former dictator. Octavian had no choice but to retaliate. He told the Senate that Antony had "gone native" and that he had been effeminated by the Egyptian queen. Mark Antony divorced Octavia and accused Octavian of forging Caesar's will. Rome was drawn into a civil war – which culminated in the defeat of Antony at the Battle of Actium.

After his clear victory, Octavian returned to Rome. During the 12 months that followed, he left Antony and Cleopatra to contemplate their defeat and consider their demise. Egypt's neighbouring territories were largely annexed to Rome; for this reason, Antony and Cleopatra's attempts to regroup and raise an army proved futile.

It was in August 30 BCE that Octavian finally invaded Egypt. Antony made one last valiant attempt to usurp the Roman leader, but in the end, his fate had been cast. He did what was required of all honourable Roman soldiers and fell upon his sword. In an attempt to safeguard her children Cleopatra made a tentative effort to make terms with Octavian. In his final hour, Antony was brought to Cleopatra's mausoleum and he died in her arms. Octavian allowed Cleopatra to conduct burial rituals for Antony's body. While he presented an outward show of friendship, he naturally wanted her dead. He was, in fact, in a difficult position.

Roman law dictated that Cleopatra should be treated as an enemy of the state. She should be taken back to Rome in shackles and paraded before the mob. However, a female ruler was a rare entity – the display could end up backfiring on Octavian and prove highly distasteful.

> "Roman law dictated Cleopatra should be treated as an enemy of the state, taken back to Rome and paraded before the mob"

He was relieved then, when Cleopatra took the courageous decision to end her own life. Some historians believe that she was bitten by a snake hidden in a fig basket. Others suggest that she drank wine laced with hemlock. An account of her death can be found in Plutarch's *Lives*.

'The messengers [of Octavian] came at full speed, and found the guards apprehensive of nothing; but, on opening the doors, they saw her stone-dead, lying upon a bed of gold, set out in all her royal ornaments. Iras, one of her women, lay dying at her feet, and Charmion, just ready to fall, scarce able to hold up her head, was adjusting her mistress's diadem. And when one that came in said angrily, "Was this well done of your lady, Charmion?" "Extremely well," she answered, "and as became the descendant of so many kings". As she said this she fell down dead by the bedside.'

In Rome, the son of the orator Cicero announced the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra with relish. Mark Antony was stripped of his accolades, his image erased from coinage and his statues removed. Under threat from Octavian, Iullus Antonius – Mark Antony's eldest son – later committed suicide. Concurring with Homer – that "It is bad to have too many Caesars" – Octavian also had Caesarion murdered. The remaining children of Cleopatra and Antony were spared and taken to Rome where they were adopted by Antony's family.

With the death of Cleopatra, the Sun had finally set on the Hellenistic Dynasty – and indeed on the 3,000-year rule of the pharaohs.

End of an Era

Cleopatra's surviving children were adopted by Octavia, became Roman citizens and faded quickly into obscurity. Egypt, now a Roman province, was ruled by a prefect. Greek remained the official language. While Alexandria continued to flourish, it became a site of many religious and military uprisings. In 269 CE Alexandria was claimed by yet another woman, when Zenobia, the ferocious warrior Queen of Palmyra, conquered Egypt. Zenobia – an admirer of Cleopatra – was quick to behead her detested Roman foes. She ruled Egypt until 274, before she herself was taken hostage by the Roman Emperor Aurelian; in an ironic twist of fate, Zenobia appeared in golden chains during Aurelian's Triumph in Rome.

The legacy of Greco-Roman Egypt still survives. It can be seen in a series of magnificent temples that were built along the River Nile. These include the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, where fabulous images of Cleopatra and Caesarion still dominate its walls.

The delicate amalgamation of the Egyptian and Roman cultures can be seen on many mummy portrait panels from the Greco-Roman period. Contrasts are visible in paintings and sculptures where traditional Egyptian iconography is paired with Roman symbolism. The result – a hybrid blend of the ancient and even more ancient – is now all that remains of the former bond between Rome and Egypt: Antony and Cleopatra.

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Killing Lincoln

On 14 April 1865 at Ford's Theatre, Washington DC, John Wilkes Booth held a derringer to the back of Lincoln's head and carried out one of history's most infamous assassinations

Written by Rob Jones



Entering the Presidential Box at Ford's Theatre, President Abraham Lincoln stood before his chair while *Our American Cousin* – the play currently showing that he was late for – was halted, the entire audience rose from their seats and the orchestra played *Hail To The Chief*. Thousands of hands rang out in deafening applause, celebrating the now increasingly evident feats of a man who would go down in history as one of humanity's greatest-ever leaders. Lincoln and the Union had guided the United States of America through one of the most turbulent periods in its short history – a civil war that had claimed thousands of lives and had left the developing country broken. As the applause died away, Lincoln sat back to enjoy the play, little knowing what danger awaited him...

The date was 4 March 1865. The Confederate Army was on its last legs. News had spread of the Union's inevitable victory and the president of the United States – Abraham Lincoln – was standing outside the US Capitol building, its new central dome towering over an assembled crowd numbering in the thousands. Lincoln was about to deliver his second inaugural address as president – the topic: reconstruction of a battered and broken nation. There was to be no grandstanding and political rallying this day, just a pervasive sadness that it had come to this – that over 600,000 Americans lay dead, a newly formed country was reeling financially and, in some states, slavery remained ingrained as part of everyday life. This speech was an opportunity for President Lincoln to outline the way forward. The crowd waited...

The disconcerting and dangerous thing with crowds though – as has been proven again and again through history – is that by their very nature they transform their constituent parts into one homogeneous mass, shrouding individuals.

And this was no more true than on this bright day in March, with a killer standing mere metres away from the US president. Looking down on Lincoln from the rear-left as he gave his heartfelt speech, renowned actor John Wilkes Booth listened and learned. He learned of the president's abhorrence to slavery, the need for the country to rebuild not just its material worth, but also that of the ideas it promoted, and that while the southern Confederacy was to be defeated, their role in carrying the country forward must be ensured. Booth also realised he had "a splendid chance to kill the president where he stood".



JOHN WILKES BOOTH

American, 1838-1865

Brief Bio

John Wilkes Booth came from one of America's most famous acting families, performing across the country in a variety of shows. From Maryland, Booth was a well-known Confederate sympathiser and was strongly against Lincoln's proposed abolition of slavery. Booth famously shot President Lincoln during a performance of the play *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theatre, Washington DC.

Who else was involved in the plot to take out the Union leadership?

As well as Lincoln, Booth and his fellow conspirators also marked Secretary of State William Seward and Vice-President Andrew Johnson for death, with a planned sweep of the three most important men in the country intended to bring the US Union to its knees, allowing the Confederacy to once more gain a foothold. Booth assigned Lewis Powell to take out Seward, while George Atzerodt was tasked to eliminate Johnson.



Lewis Powell

Powell was tasked with killing Seward at his home in Lafayette Park. However, acting as a messenger to gain entry, he was stopped at the top of the dwelling's staircase by Seward's son, Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Seward, who was suspicious of his presence. This led Powell to attack the Assistant Secretary before entering Seward's bedroom and repeatedly attempting to stab the vice-president. However he failed to land a fatal blow and, after fighting with numerous other inhabitants of the house, he fled, allegedly screaming, "I'm mad! I'm mad!".



George Atzerodt

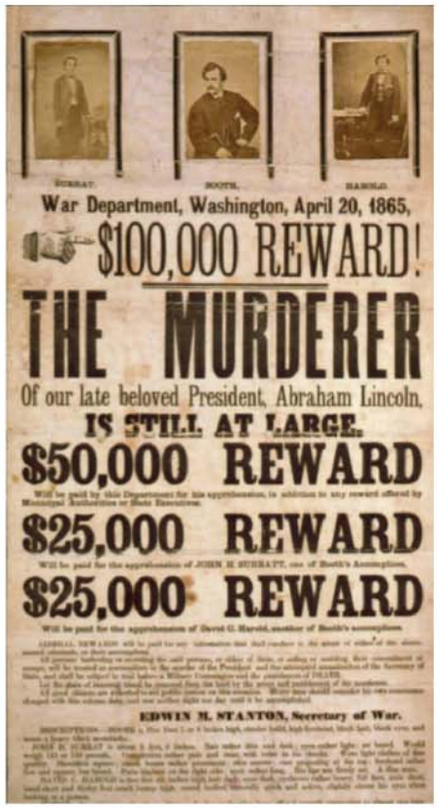
Atzerodt's tale was nowhere near as eventful. Tasked with going to Kirkwood House in Washington DC where Andrew Johnson was staying, and shooting him at 10.15pm, Atzerodt did no such thing, instead getting drunk in a hotel bar. After talking to the bartender about the vice-president, he left the hotel and threw his knife into the street. At 2am he checked in at the Pennsylvania House Hotel and went to sleep. He was later caught and hung along with three other conspirators.



John Surratt

Despite playing no part in the eventual attempted murders, John Surratt was one of Booth's original conspirators, agreeing to kidnap and ransom the president for the release of Confederate soldiers. He was quickly accused of playing a key role in the attacks on 14 April, with an arrest warrant issued. Unlike the other conspirators, who were all captured or killed, Surratt managed to escape the manhunt and fled to Canada. He did later return to the USA and was put on trial, but was found not guilty.

Later on, by 17 March 1865, John Wilkes Booth – along with David Herold, George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell (aka Paine), John Surratt and Edmund Spangler, all of whom had been present on 4 March – decided to ditch their recently hatched plan to kidnap Lincoln. The conspirators – all supporters of the crumbling Confederacy and enraged by Lincoln's iron resolve to abolish slavery – had intended to hold the president hostage and ransom his return for the release of notable Confederate Army prisoners. However the game had now changed. Lincoln's address had tipped the balance; now the leader of the USA was on the verge of being marked for death, alongside Vice-President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward. The slate was to be wiped clean by Booth and the conspirators so that the Confederacy might rise again from the ashes.



It was now the morning of 14 April 1865. John Wilkes Booth lay in his bed at the National Hotel, Washington DC. Opening his diary, he wrote, 'Our cause being almost lost, something decisive and great must be done.' After eating, Booth headed to Ford's Theatre around midday. As a well-known actor he had a permanent mailbox at the building and so routinely stopped by to collect his post. His murderous scheme was beginning to formulate in his mind...

Booth now firmly believed that Lincoln was hell-bent on destroying the South and everything it stood for, after he had reaffirmed his stance on slavery during a speech on 11 April, where he supported the idea of enfranchising former slaves. Booth, who had attended the talk at the White House just as he had done on Lincoln's inauguration day, had now been tipped over the edge. Provoked by Lincoln's speech he promised to 'put him through', stating that this would be 'the last speech he will ever give'. Kidnapping was now definitely off the cards; Lincoln, Seward and Johnson all must die – an opportune moment was all Booth needed.

Riffling through his letters at Ford's Theatre, that moment fell into his lap. While chatting to the brother of the theatre's owner, John Ford, Booth became aware that both the president and famous war hero General Grant would be attending that very theatre that evening to see the farce *Our American Cousin*. Like a bullet, the final plan



An assassin's tool by the numbers

Philadelphia Derringer

$12.50	1	1.5-6 INCHES	.41 INCHES	1852-1868
PRICE	BARREL	BARREL LENGTH	BORE SIZE	PRODUCTION RUN

Timeline of events

1865

- Lincoln delivers his second inaugural speech. **4 March**



- Booth plots the conspiracy at the Old Soldiers' Home. **6 March**

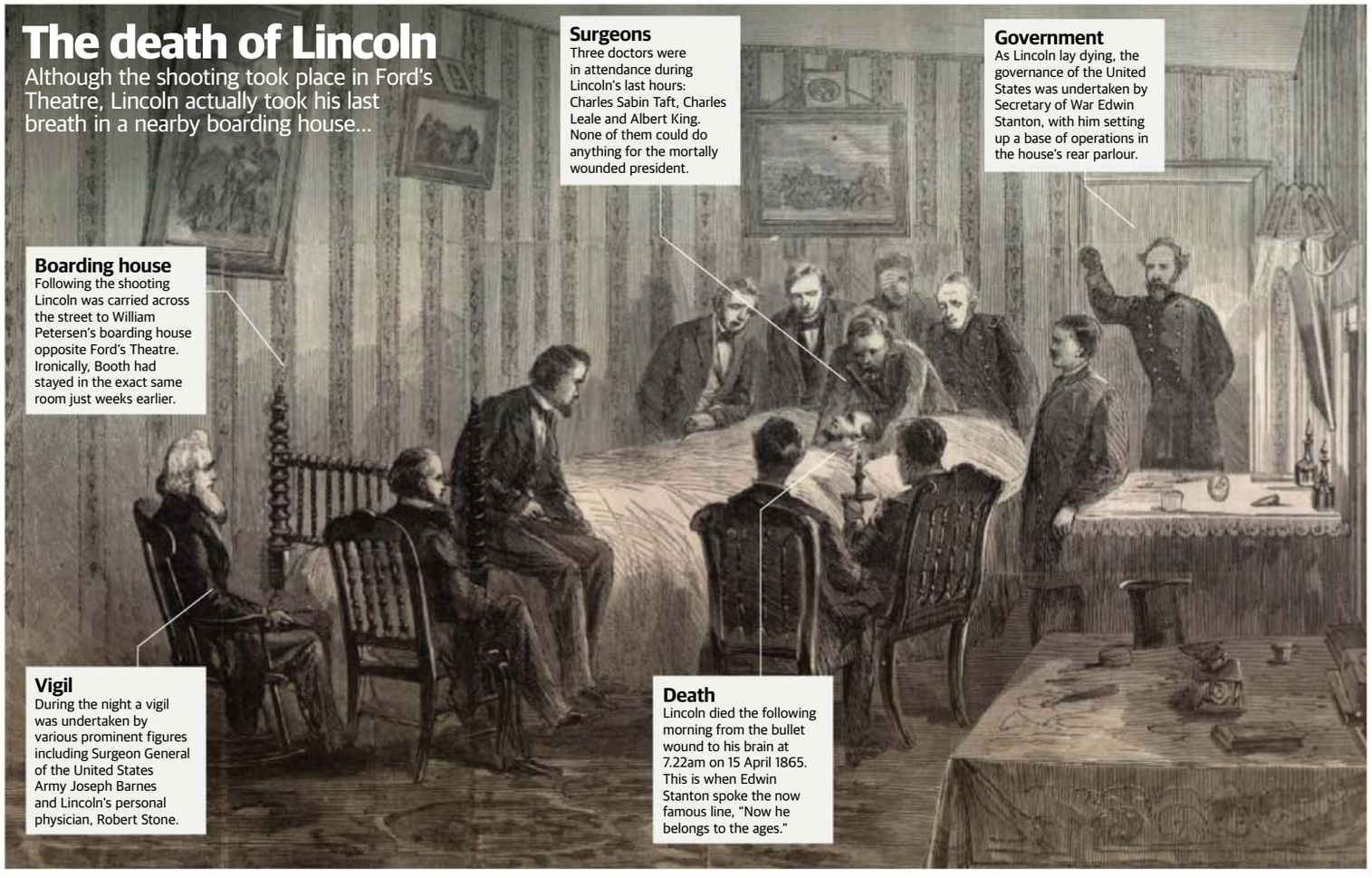


- Booth shoots and kills President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre. **14 April**



- Lewis Powell tries to kill William Seward but fails. **14 April**





exploded into Booth's mind. He knew the theatre's layout well, having performed there just the previous month – indeed, he knew the entrances, exits, stairwells, corridors and backstage passes all like the back of his hand. Lincoln was to step forth into his domain and, as Booth now resolved, he would not be stepping out again.

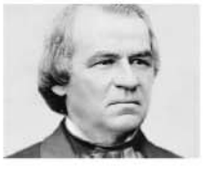
Bolting across town, Booth went immediately to a boarding house and requested that a package be delivered to the house's sister establishment in Surrattsville, Maryland, also requesting that weapons he had stored previously there be made ready for his arrival. With his first port-of-call following his intended escape from Washington laid out, Booth then – at roughly seven o'clock in the evening – called on his fellow conspirators.

Here Booth outlined his new plan and assigned Powell to kill Seward in his home and Atzerodt to eliminate Johnson at his temporary base at the Kirkwood Hotel. Booth assigned himself the biggest scalp – Lincoln himself – and then informed them all to strike at shortly after 10pm that evening. The men, preparing for what lay ahead, disappeared into the night.

Entering Ford's Theatre Booth took time to re-evaluate the plan. It would be easy to execute the American premier for many reasons. Firstly,

"Booth assigned himself the biggest scalp – Lincoln – and then informed them all to strike at shortly after 10pm"

- George Atzerodt fails to kill Vice-President Andrew Johnson. **14 April**



- President Lincoln dies from the gunshot wound. **15 April**



- Wanted posters are put up offering a reward for Booth's capture. **20 April**



- Lincoln's body is taken to Springfield, IL, via a funeral train. **21 April**



- Booth is gunned down at the Garrett Farm, VA. **26 April**



- Mary Surratt, Lewis Powell, David Herold and George Atzerodt are hung. **7 July**



Booth could run the warrens of the theatre without thought; secondly he was well known to both the theatre's staff and owner, allowing him to approach his target in plain sight and, thirdly – above all – he now had little regard for his own life, his future erased by a burning sense of injustice. Even if Lincoln's box was guarded, it would be token resistance and all Booth would need to do was make it past the security for a fraction of a second to take his shot.

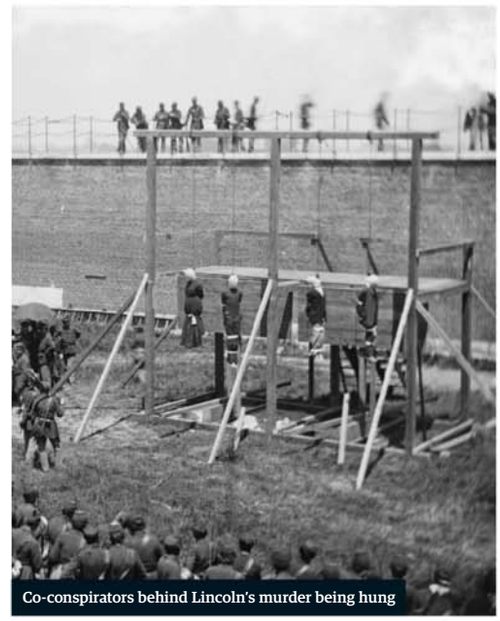
As the show's last bell rang – indicating the audience should take their seats – Booth began to walk methodically through the mingling crowds. Ascending through the theatre and then up to the first floor via a series of walkways and stairwells, Booth approached a vantage point from which he could watch as his mark took his seat. But, as Booth gazed over to the Presidential Box, his plan came crashing down around his feet: Lincoln wasn't there. He had been deceived – misinformation or Chinese whispers leading him on a wild goose chase. All, it appeared, was lost.

But Lincoln was coming – that much became evident; staff still anticipated the president at Ford's Theatre, even though he would be arriving late. Booth, whose life now revolved around ending President Lincoln's couldn't have left even if he had wanted; all he could do was wait...

"Booth could never have known, but the man charged to accompany the Lincolns had gone to a nearby bar"

It was during the first act of the play when Lincoln, his wife and retinue finally arrived. The show was halted and the president was applauded. Booth then moved with lethal efficiency. He just had to make his approach to the box during the show, get past the guards to Lincoln's box and then... But incredibly, when he arrived at the box, there were no guards. Booth could never have known, but the man charged to accompany the Lincolns during their outing had gone to a nearby bar along with Lincoln's footman and coachman during the play's interval and had failed to return in time for the show's next act.

To think that the most powerful and important man in the entire country was now completely defenceless, to Booth, was almost insanity itself. Steeling himself, Booth approached the box's door, slid it open, waited for a round of laughter from the audience and then, in one fever-dream rush, placed his derringer pistol at point-blank range to the back of Abraham Lincoln's head and fired. One of history's greatest leaders now had just hours to live.



Co-conspirators behind Lincoln's murder being hung

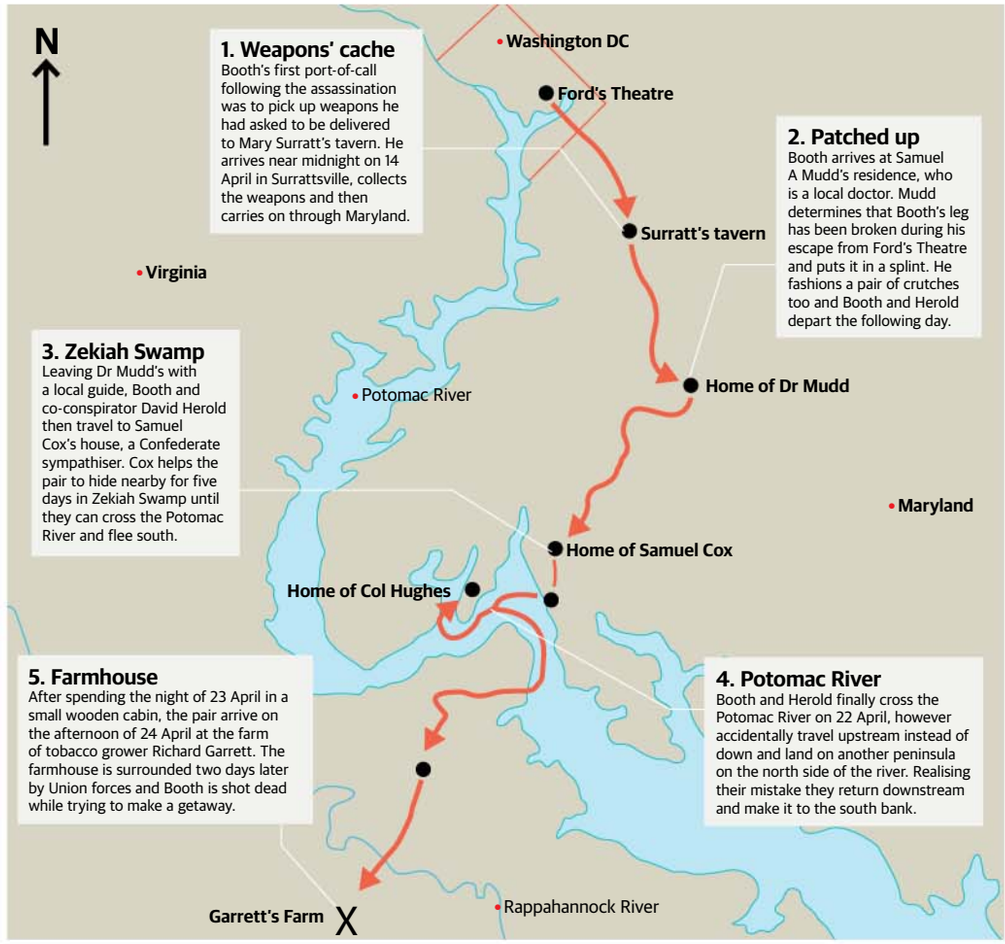
On the run!

Following the assassination, Booth – who had injured his leg during his escape – quickly made for his supplies and horse in Washington DC. Within 30 minutes he was riding at speed across the Navy Yard Bridge and out into Maryland to the south. His fellow conspirator, David Herold – who had guided Lewis Powell to the home of Secretary of State William Seward – followed him roughly an hour later, meeting Booth at a pre-planned rendezvous point.

Both men then proceeded to Surrattsville, where Booth had ordered weapons and supplies to be delivered to Mary Surratt's tavern. After retrieving the weapons the pair headed to Samuel Mudd's house, a local doctor who attended to Booth's leg, which was broken. He created a splint and crutches and, after a day in the house, Booth and Herold continued south with a local guide. The guide was to take them directly to Confederate sympathiser Samuel Cox.

After arriving at Cox's house, close to the north bank of the Potomac River, Cox helped Booth and Herold hide in the nearby Zekiah Swamp, where they remained for five days as they awaited their transport across the river. When they did eventually cross the river, however, they inadvertently travelled upstream and landed once more on the Potomac's north bank. Realising their error, Booth and Herold retraced their steps and headed for the opposite bank once more.

Arriving on the south bank of the Potomac, the pair spent a night in a wooden cabin at a small farmstead, before heading to the farm of tobacco farmer Richard Garrett, which was located near Bowling Green, Virginia. Here Booth told Garrett that he was a wounded Confederate soldier and was granted lodgings, staying for two days. Finally however, 12 days after going on the run, Booth and Herold were tracked down. Union soldiers surrounded the Garrett farmhouse and, whereas Herold gave himself up, Booth attempted to escape and was gunned down.



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NEXT ISSUE

What's coming in next month's **All About History?**



On sale 22 August

HENRY VIII THE INVADER

How the king of England captured France



HISTORY'S 10 MOST MURDEROUS KINGS

Which ruler has clocked up the highest body count?



LIFE IN BABYLON UNCOVERED

In search of a lost civilisation in Ancient Mesopotamia



HOW THE GREAT WAR STARTED

20 defining moments that led to the outbreak of WWI

PLUS

Battle of Waterloo
The real Dracula
A history of conflict
Ancient Greece
Edo, 1868
War through the ages
The Black Death
Notre Dame
Medieval knights

EMPIRE VS EMPIRE

THE MOST POWERFUL CIVILISATIONS THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN FACE-OFF FOR THE TITLE OF GREATEST EMPIRE OF ALL TIME

Written by April Madden

The word 'empire' can sometimes have negative connotations, conjuring up ideas of conquest, colonialism and oppression. But from another perspective, empires can be seen as the engines that brought about modern civilisation. Since the dawn of the human race, people were looking beyond their own territory and conquering their neighbours. As military technology and logistics progressed, empires emerged. No longer just a collection of local villages and fields, by the sixth century BCE empires could encompass vast areas of land.

Their increasing populations meant that standing armies could be bigger (making their next conquest easier to win), while increased revenues from farming and taxes funded the maintenance of those armies. Despite their faults – and all the empires here are guilty of some major atrocities along with their achievements – at their best, rich, well-fed and well-defended empires provided both the financial and physical security that allowed their citizens to enjoy more wealth, and for the fields of art and science to flourish. In this feature, we take a closer look at ten world-changing empires – the superpowers of their day – but which one comes out on top?



KEY LEADERS
Nurhaci, Dorgon, Puyi
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

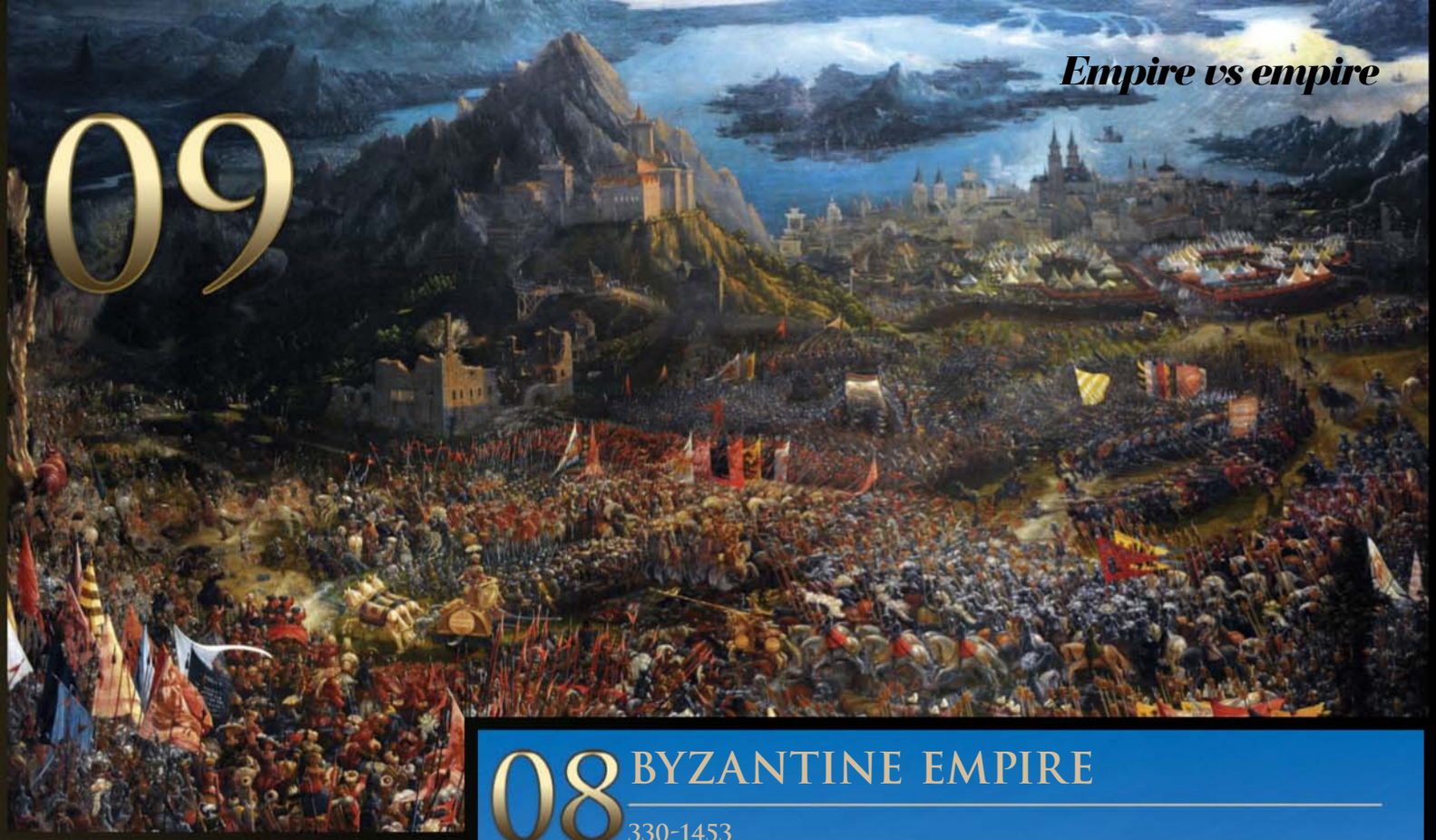
10 GREAT QING EMPIRE

1644-1912

With nearly 300 years of unbroken supremacy to its name, the Qing Dynasty was the last of China's imperial dynasties, with its rule replaced by the Republic of China in the early-20th century.

Originally made up of a social group of poor rebels called the Jurchen rather than the Han Chinese aristocracy and demographic majority, on seizing power the Qing Dynasty maintained many of the same political and civil structures put in place by their predecessors, while asserting the supremacy of their own social identity, which evolved under tribal leader Nurhaci and became known as Manchu. Later one of his successors – the regent Dorgon – introduced clothing and haircutting laws designed to oppress his Han subjects that have influenced the stereotypical view of Chinese costume and culture ever since. The long-held tension between the Han and the Manchu was key to the Asian conflicts of World War II, and saw both factions playing out battles whose lines had been drawn centuries before.

09



ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

550-330 BCE

At its height the Achaemenid Empire (or the First Persian Empire) was the largest the world had seen at the time. Founded by Cyrus the Great, it began in the Persian Gulf in the rich lands between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers (now Iraq), encompassed most of the Middle East and stretched from Thrace (Bulgaria) to Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-west India. Its second ruler, Cambyses II, took Egypt, which was the jewel in the crown of the empire, although his own courtiers spectacularly betrayed its last ruler, Darius III, and he eventually lost the empire to Alexander the Great. Herodotus (an Ancient Greek often considered to be the first historian) recorded its rise and fall as a key part of his *Histories*.

While its territory and military might is smaller than some other empires here, the Achaemenid Empire gave civilisation a legacy of practical and life-changing technical and logistic innovations: it had a postal system, a road network that was maintained by the state and an official language to help its citizens communicate. The Persians also invented a garment that is worn by millions of people around the world every day: trousers.

KEY LEADERS
Cyrus the Great, Cambyses II, Darius III
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

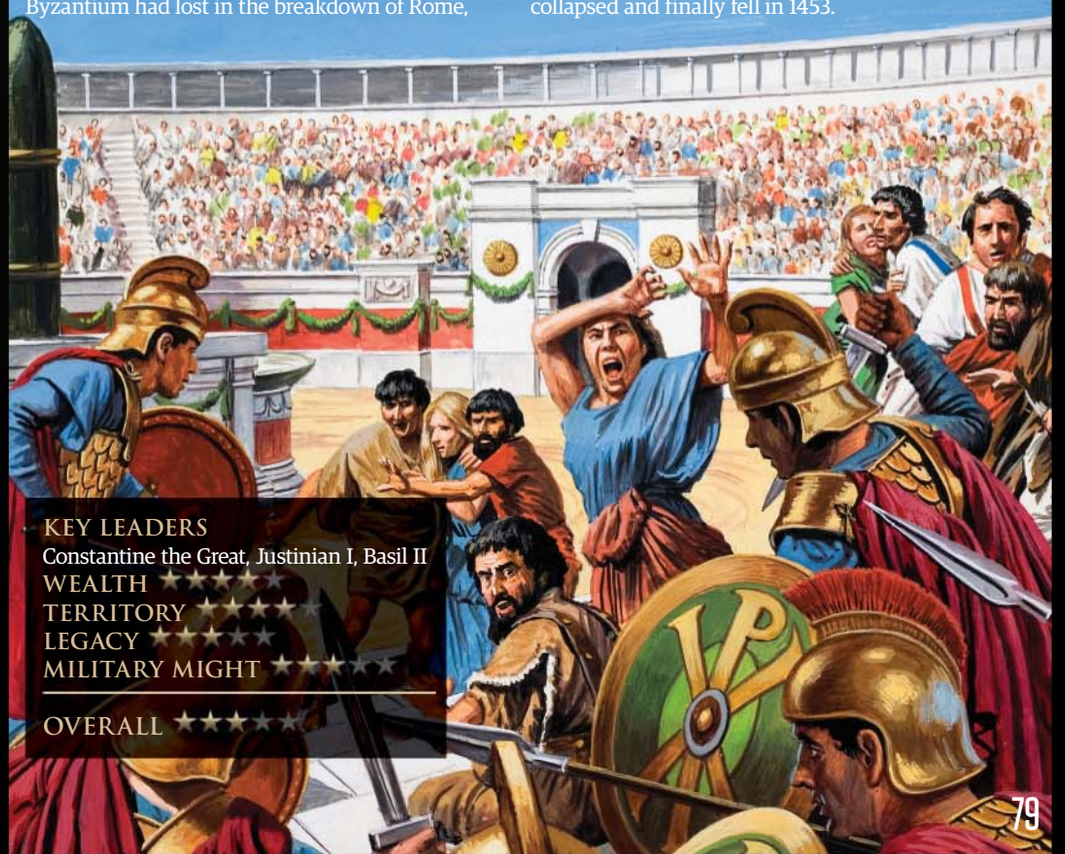
OVERALL ★★★★★

08 BYZANTINE EMPIRE

330-1453

It seems from the dates that the Byzantine Empire lasted over a thousand years, but in fact political manoeuvring, changes in leadership and outright war mean that it skips a few centuries here and there. Its capital city, Byzantium (now Istanbul in present-day Turkey) was originally a Roman outpost, before briefly becoming the capital of the Roman Empire itself and changing its name to Constantinople after the Emperor Constantine.

With the fracture of the Roman Empire in 285 CE, the Byzantine Empire set out on its own. The Emperor Justinian I reclaimed many of the lands Byzantium had lost in the breakdown of Rome, before taking on Persia, areas of northern Africa and even Italy itself. His aim was to restore the lost glory of Rome, but Byzantium was emerging as a distinct culture in its own right, and Justinian was actually the last emperor who spoke Latin as a first language; subsequent rulers would speak Greek. Under new Macedonian rulers in the tenth century, Emperor Basil II expanded the Byzantine Empire's reach from Russia in the north to southern Italy and from present-day Israel to Germany to the east and west - however his golden age was the last before the empire collapsed and finally fell in 1453.



KEY LEADERS
Constantine the Great, Justinian I, Basil II
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

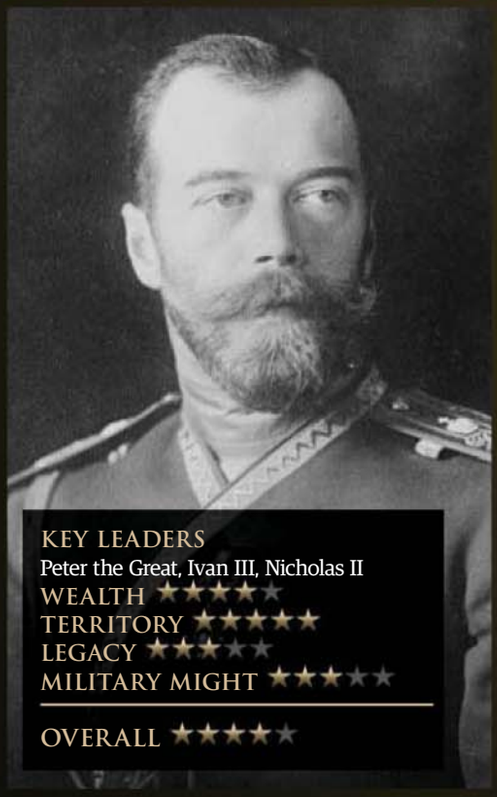
07 OTTOMAN EMPIRE

1299-1922

The people that ousted the Byzantine Empire from its home base were the Ottomans, and this empire outdid its predecessor in both territory and staying power. Founded by Osman I in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople transformed the Ottoman from upstart to empire. Stretching across the width of the Mediterranean basin from Algiers to Baghdad and north to south from Budapest to the Arabian Gulf at its height, the Ottoman Empire lasted from the Middle Ages until well into the 20th century – and it was all thanks to the strategic location of its capital. This placed it in a crucial nexus between Europe and the East, allowing the Ottoman Empire to feed on territory and trade from both sides. Its longest-reigning and arguably most powerful ruler is remembered with the ostentatious title Suleiman the Magnificent, thanks to the wealth, culture, political traditions and peace his reign brought to the empire.

KEY LEADERS
Osman I, Mehmed II, Suleiman the Magnificent
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★



KEY LEADERS
Peter the Great, Ivan III, Nicholas II
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

06 RUSSIAN EMPIRE

1721-1917

Although the Ottomans broke the Byzantine Empire, they didn't break its spirit – some of its culture and traditions lived on in Russia. Exported to the Kievan Rus around the tenth century, Byzantine art and its Orthodox Christianity took root and grew into new forms, eventually culminating in the riches of the Russian Empire.

An absolute monarchy – meaning that the emperor wielded total political power – it was founded by Peter the Great (in reaction to the territory-grabbing of the Ottomans) and consolidated by Ivan III. Its territory encompassed huge tracts of Europe, Asia and even parts of North America from the Arctic to the Pacific.

Fuelled by the fruits of one of the largest imperial territories the world has ever seen, the imperial court's culture of conspicuous consumption was its eventual downfall. Forced to become a less powerful constitutional monarchy in 1905, the last tsar, Nicholas II, had to abdicate in 1917 before being executed along with his family in the revolution.

"While some empires are built on landmass, some come together through sheer force of will"

05 MACEDONIAN EMPIRE

NINTH CENTURY – 146 BCE

While some empires are built on landmass alone, some come together through sheer force of will. Macedonia was a small kingdom on the outskirts of the Greek heartlands and was considered somewhat backward and rural. But under a father-and-son team of rulers, it would rise to become the most powerful state of its time, dominating the ancient world with a reach from Egypt to India.

Philip II took the throne of Macedon in 359 BCE. He was originally intended to serve as regent for his nephew, but took the throne for himself and began expanding Macedonia's territory outwards. After Philip's assassination in 336 BCE, his son Alexander became king, and with his reign came the military unification of the Greek states, a ten-year campaign that broke the Persian Empire and expanded across the Mediterranean and beyond to India, as well as the conquest of Egypt. Alexander the Great was one of the most brilliant military commanders in history and he was the powerhouse that drove the Macedonian Empire. After his death in 323 BCE at the age of just 33, Alexander's charisma-driven military machine largely fell apart. Without an heir, the empire soon followed it, although Antigonus III eventually re-established some of its local territory.

KEY LEADERS
Philip II, Alexander the Great, Antigonus III Doson
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★



04 MONGOL EMPIRE

1721-1917

It might have been relatively short-lived but the Mongol Empire managed to get an awful lot done. Unusually for an empire, it was founded not in a land-grab for living space, but by a nomadic people. Despite this, it ended up as the largest contiguous empire (that is, made up of lands that border each other in an unbroken line) that the world has ever seen. It comprised all of present-day Mongolia and China, stretching from the Sea of Japan all the way to areas of Russia and eastern Europe. An enforced peace among the nations in between increased trade and, for the first time, made Asian goods readily available in Western markets and vice versa, making the Mongol Empire an example of globalisation on a truly massive scale.

On conquering China the nomadic Mongols retained many of the traditions of the Chinese court. Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai, in particular was deeply enamoured with all things Chinese and took on the title of Emperor of China, founding the Yuan Dynasty. He was also instrumental in the European discovery of China; Marco Polo is alleged to have met him and even served as a diplomat on his travels to the East.

After the death of Kublai Khan, the Mongol Empire fractured into several smaller groups, bringing its brief but glorious rule to an end.

KEY LEADERS
Genghis Khan, Möngke Khan, Kublai Khan
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★





03 THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

800-1806

With over a thousand years to its name, the Holy Roman Empire differs from some of its peers due to its structure. Unlike other empires that imposed common languages and a totalitarian government, the Holy Roman Empire spent much of its time as a confederation of European states, united by the royal dynasty that were otherwise free to speak their own tongue and follow their own customs. It was founded in the early-Middle Ages by Charlemagne, who wanted to re-create the power of the Byzantine Empire in central Europe.

At its height under Emperor Henry III, the Holy Roman Empire encompassed much of France, Germany, Bohemia (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) and Italy. Between 1438 and 1740 it was ruled by the Habsburg Dynasty – the monarchs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The first Habsburg ruler of the Holy Roman Empire was Frederick III and the Habsburgs kept familial control of the Holy Roman Empire until the 18th century, until the genetic consequences of the frequent inter-marrying between cousins in the family led to their eventual demise. The Holy Roman Empire fell to Napoleon less than 100 years later.

KEY LEADERS
Charlemagne, Henry III, Frederick III
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

02 BRITISH EMPIRE

1497-1997

Famously, the Sun never set on the British Empire, thanks to the sheer amount of territory it possessed at its pinnacle. From humble beginnings on one of the world's smallest island nations, the British Empire eventually comprised parts of America, Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Middle East. It was established, arguably, by Elizabeth I, who sent out explorers such as Francis Drake – ostensibly to find new lands but also to harry Britain's enemies at sea.

With the Industrial Revolution beginning in Britain, it was perfectly poised to use its new technologies to extend its sphere of influence. Steam-powered ships made crossing oceans easier, while trains made transcontinental journeys possible. Communications innovations such as Morse code and later radio and telephone connected the great cities, while distinctly British foods and sports made their way around the world. English is still one of the planet's most widely spoken languages to this day. The British Empire gradually gave up many of its territories or amalgamated them into the current Commonwealth. It is considered to end in 1997 with the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule.

KEY LEADERS
Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria, Winston Churchill
WEALTH ★★★★★
TERRITORY ★★★★★
LEGACY ★★★★★
MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★



01 THE ROMAN EMPIRE

27 BCE – 476 CE

It might be smaller than some of the others included here, but the Roman Empire casts a long shadow over history – one that persists to this day. In its time it was the world's largest empire – in fact, it was pretty much Europe's only empire, and it encompassed almost every area of the European continent together with Britain and parts of Africa, modern-day Turkey and the Middle East.

Rome's influence on the world simply can't be overstated. Its crack troops – the legions – were a fighting force to be reckoned with, and successive Roman emperors deployed them in search of more and more conquests, expanding the empire outwards. But Rome wasn't just interested in seizing territory for goods and profit. The Romans genuinely believed that their society and technology represented the high point of civilisation, and they exported many of their technical innovations and traditions to the nations that they conquered. Straight, flat roads made travel and trade easier. Viaducts sprang over valleys and between hills to facilitate travel, while aqueducts channelled water to inland areas without wells and springs. Central heating systems brought warmth to homes – this was especially important as the Romans moved northwards into France and Britain. A common language – Latin – made communication easier.

Rome's technical innovations made many aspects of life better for its populace both inside the city and in the wider empire, but it's Rome's legacy that really makes it the most important empire in history. Byzantium was its home-from-home, and the Roman ideology that flourished there inspired the Byzantines to build their own empire. The Holy Roman Empire saw itself as the last bastion of the Roman civilisation right up until the 19th century. Rome's imperial line – the caesars – gave their name to both the Russian ruler's title – tsar – and to our modern word for a powerful overseer, particularly in politics: czar.

From the territories it unified to the languages and political systems it influenced to its array of technical innovations that have stood the test of time, Rome was truly the empire that most changed the world and left a lasting impact.

KEY LEADERS

Julius Caesar, Augustus (Octavian), Emperor Hadrian

WEALTH ★★★★★

TERRITORY ★★★★★

LEGACY ★★★★★

MILITARY MIGHT ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

"ROME'S TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS MADE LIFE BETTER FOR ITS POPULACE BOTH INSIDE THE CITY AND IN THE WIDER EMPIRE"

© Alamy, Look and Learn

WHILE EVERYONE FOCUSED ON THE US–USSR POWER STRUGGLE, AN EVEN MORE BITTER CONFLICT WAS PLAYING OUT BETWEEN THE USSR AND CHINA...

Written by James Hoare

THE OTHER COL



On 2 March 1969, the Strategic Missile Forces went to high alert – their nuclear warheads ready to be loosed at targets 1,600 kilometres (1,000 miles) away in less than 15 minutes.

On the banks of a frozen river, opposing soldiers of two nuclear powers bled to death in the snow, as a cold war that Kennedy didn't fight and Reagan wouldn't win turned hot.

This wasn't East versus West; this was East versus Far East – a murderous mirror image of the standoff between communism and capitalism. This was the other cold war.

In the red corner, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the height of its military expansion under the iron fist of the repressive Leonid Brezhnev. In the other red corner, the People's Republic of China, in the grip of a cultural revolution that had purged the last independent thinkers to replace them with a fanatical devotion to the unpredictable Mao Zedong.

On 2 March 1969, under what CIA analysts believed were direct orders from Mao's government in Beijing, Chinese border guards and soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) ambushed a unit of Soviet KGB border troops. Appearing unarmed, the Chinese threw aside their winter coats and gunned seven of them down at close range on the disputed Zhenbao/ Damansky Island in the frozen Ussuri River

COLD WAR

where Chinese Manchuria meets the Soviet far east. Instantly, around 300 more PLA soldiers burst out of foxholes and opened fire on the remaining Soviets.

This brutal clash was the escalation of a 'pushing war' in which Soviet and Chinese soldiers had patrolled the same contested stretch of tundra, shouting and shoving each other for years. Mao's gambit was that either the Soviets wouldn't retaliate, or would do so at a small scale, despite the huge buildup of Red Army might in the region.

He was right: the response was small, but coming from a foe considerably better armed, it was still a crushing and humbling defeat.

The KGB's elite border guards in snow camouflage embedded themselves on the island, cutting down a Chinese detachment with a rattle of automatic fire in a bloody counter-ambush, while state-of-the-art T-62 medium tanks and devastating BM-21 Grad rocket artillery were brought up, resulting in what CIA reports described as 'several hundred' Chinese casualties.

The Chinese began to dig in for further conflict, while the Soviets armed their warheads and issued threats, and this bitter clash for ownership of a single waterway and a handful of rocky islands threatened to enter an even more dramatic and deadly phase.

Eventually though, Mao backed down and diplomatic negotiations over the territory resumed. He was ready for a land invasion, and perhaps even prepared for a nuclear strike, but he wasn't about to see his fledgling nuclear programme – the key to China's status as a world power – wiped out.

Flying back from the funeral of Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi, the Soviet prime minister, Alexei Kosygin, stopped in Beijing for talks with his Chinese counterpart, Zhou Enlai. Mao refused to attend, and the meeting that brought the Sino-Soviet Border War to an end was held in Beijing Airport.

The relationship was normalised, but it certainly wasn't normal – in fact, it never had been; this first bloody-knuckled drag-'em-out between two of the most volatile superpowers is stark evidence of just how real the danger of nuclear escalation was.

The emphasis that Beijing placed on protecting its infant nuclear status is the real signifier that the Sino-Soviet Border Conflict was much more in political terms than just a tussle for strategically



GLOBAL FLASHPOINTS

Key
How involved was each power in world conflict?

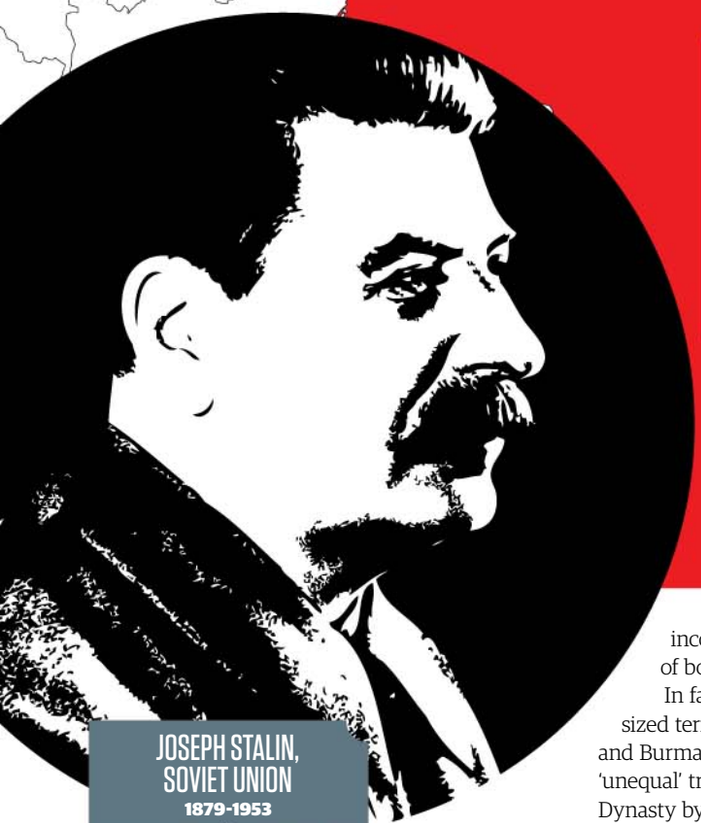
	China	USSR
Loans & aid		
Ground war		
Arms & training		
Proxy war		

Ethio-Somali War (1977-1978)
This land-war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the disputed Ogaden region turned especially complex as the USSR was initially backing both parties – both left-wing – with arms, aid and training. Failing to mediate a ceasefire, the Soviets began to more actively support Ethiopia, who were struggling to hold back their neighbour. The US, meanwhile, abandoned Ethiopia – ruled by a Marxist-Leninist junta – and threw its support firmly behind Somalia – a single-party socialist state – and China also threw in token aid.

Angolan War of Independence (1961-1974); Angolan Civil War (1975-2002)
The Soviets backed the Marxist MPLA in the war for Angola's independence from Portugal, swiftly transforming them into the largest resistance movement. China, meanwhile, backed the centre-right FNLA, before switching allegiance to the more centrist UNITA as independence gave way to civil war. The Soviets also sent troops (though not as many as Cuba), busts of Lenin and pamphlets denouncing China.

Rhodesian Bush War (1964-1979); Gukurahundi (1980-1987)
During the last gasp of white European colonial rule in what is now Zimbabwe, both China and the USSR supported rival left-wing liberation movements: China backing Robert Mugabe's Maoist-influenced ZANLA (the militant arm of ZANU), and the Soviets supporting the Marxist-Leninist ZIPRA (the fighting wing of ZAPU). Though the two bodies had the same goals, they competed for influence and territory, often turning violent. After Mugabe was elected prime minister in 1980, his personal guard – the Gukurahundi – massacred over 20,000 people they believed to be sympathetic to ZAPU.

Mozambican Civil War (1977-1992)
Though both parties supported the Marxist FRELIMO at the beginning of Mozambique's independence war with Portugal, the USSR was the rebel group's primary donor and they loyally nuzzled the hand that fed during the Sino-Soviet Split, backing Vietnam in its war with China, and supported the Soviet Union in the invasion of Afghanistan.



JOSEPH STALIN, SOVIET UNION
1879-1953

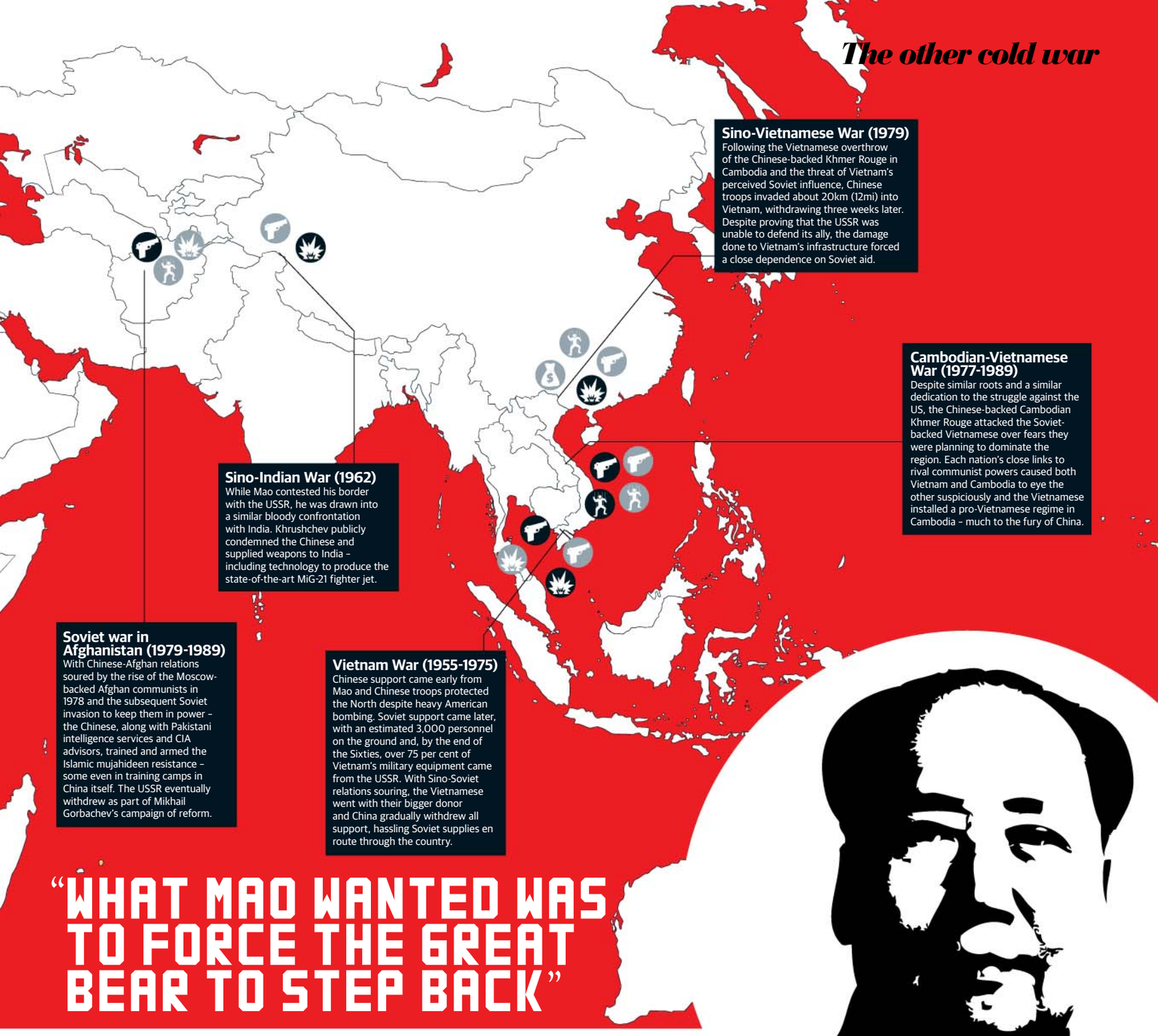
Brief Bio
Born Iosif Dzhugashvili in what is now Georgia, Stalin supported Lenin's Bolshevik party during the 1917 Russian Revolution – later using Lenin's stroke in 1922 to seize control. Stalin's reign is remembered for frequent purges, Soviet victory in World War II, and the spread of communist control throughout eastern Europe.

inconsequential strips of land on the fringes of both their vast empires.

In fact, China had happily ceded similar-sized territory in earlier treaties with Mongolia and Burma. In demanding the revision of the 'unequal' treaties bullied out of the Chinese Qing Dynasty by Tsarist Russia in 1858 and 1860, what Mao really wanted was to force the great bear to take a step back and make some concession, ending China's junior status in the communist world. His tactic was simple; he hectored and needled, denouncing 'Soviet Imperialism' openly, while his forces maintained constant probing patrols into the territory claimed by the Soviets.

The violent deterioration of the relationship between China and the USSR came as a shock to the West. The entire foreign policy of the US fixated on the idea of the 'domino effect' of communism and newly 'reddened' republics all lining up to point their armies at Uncle Sam. Despite the rhetoric that invoked ancient emperors and 19th-century misdeeds, this was only partly an ancient grudge match. Under the rosy propaganda of one unified socialist brotherhood linking arms for a better tomorrow was a very real strain that had been mounting for decades.

In the Chinese Civil War from 1927 to 1950, Soviet aid and advisors interfered in the running of the communist cause. Mao blamed several failures on Soviet influence – eg their insistence of tactics that worked in industrialised Russia during their own revolution, but which wouldn't work for the Chinese communists whose support came from rural peasantry, and also for treating the Soviet-trained CPC party grandees as more important than leaders in the field like himself.



Sino-Vietnamese War (1979)
Following the Vietnamese overthrow of the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the threat of Vietnam's perceived Soviet influence, Chinese troops invaded about 20km (12mi) into Vietnam, withdrawing three weeks later. Despite proving that the USSR was unable to defend its ally, the damage done to Vietnam's infrastructure forced a close dependence on Soviet aid.

Cambodian-Vietnamese War (1977-1989)
Despite similar roots and a similar dedication to the struggle against the US, the Chinese-backed Cambodian Khmer Rouge attacked the Soviet-backed Vietnamese over fears they were planning to dominate the region. Each nation's close links to rival communist powers caused both Vietnam and Cambodia to eye the other suspiciously and the Vietnamese installed a pro-Vietnamese regime in Cambodia – much to the fury of China.

Sino-Indian War (1962)
While Mao contested his border with the USSR, he was drawn into a similar bloody confrontation with India. Khrushchev publicly condemned the Chinese and supplied weapons to India – including technology to produce the state-of-the-art MiG-21 fighter jet.

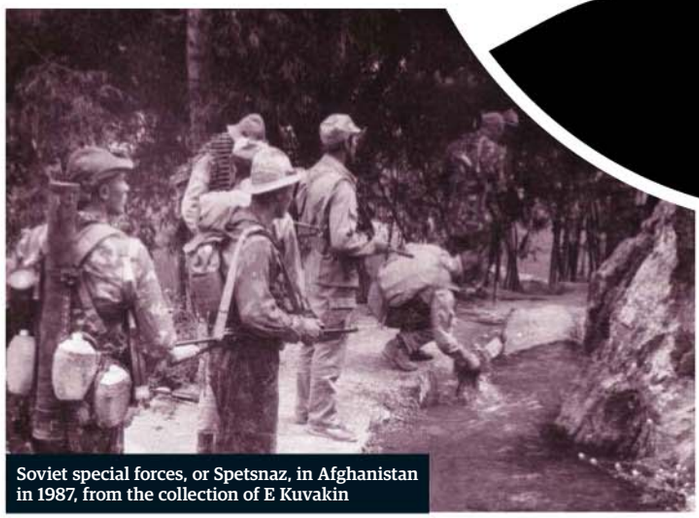
Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979-1989)
With Chinese-Afghan relations soured by the rise of the Moscow-backed Afghan communists in 1978 and the subsequent Soviet invasion to keep them in power – the Chinese, along with Pakistani intelligence services and CIA advisors, trained and armed the Islamic mujahideen resistance – some even in training camps in China itself. The USSR eventually withdrew as part of Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign of reform.

Vietnam War (1955-1975)
Chinese support came early from Mao and Chinese troops protected the North despite heavy American bombing. Soviet support came later, with an estimated 3,000 personnel on the ground and, by the end of the Sixties, over 75 per cent of Vietnam's military equipment came from the USSR. With Sino-Soviet relations souring, the Vietnamese went with their bigger donor and China gradually withdrew all support, hassling Soviet supplies en route through the country.

"WHAT MAO WANTED WAS TO FORCE THE GREAT BEAR TO STEP BACK"

Mao claimed in a 1956 conversation with the Soviet ambassador PF Yudin that these failed urban uprisings in the 1920s and early-1930s had cost the communist forces dearly, reducing its numbers from 300,000 to 25,000.

When the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 transformed into the bloody assault on the rest of China in 1937, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin encouraged Mao to form a united front with his enemy - the nationalist Kuomintang commanded by Chiang Kai-shek. More galling for Mao, Stalin then signed a treaty of friendship with the Kuomintang and treated the generalissimo as the sole representative of China. Japanese weapons captured by the Soviets were divvied out to both the CPC and the Kuomintang in 1945 and 1946, but the nationalists ended up with twice as many rifles and six times as many machine guns.



Soviet special forces, or Spetsnaz, in Afghanistan in 1987, from the collection of E Kuvakin

MAO ZEDONG, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
1893-1976

Brief Bio

Leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Mao's views were hardened by repression by the nationalist government, eventually leading to a civil war that lasted from 1927 to 1950. Following WWII, Mao defeated the nationalists, declaring the People's Republic of China in 1949 and reshaping the country as a communist dictatorship.

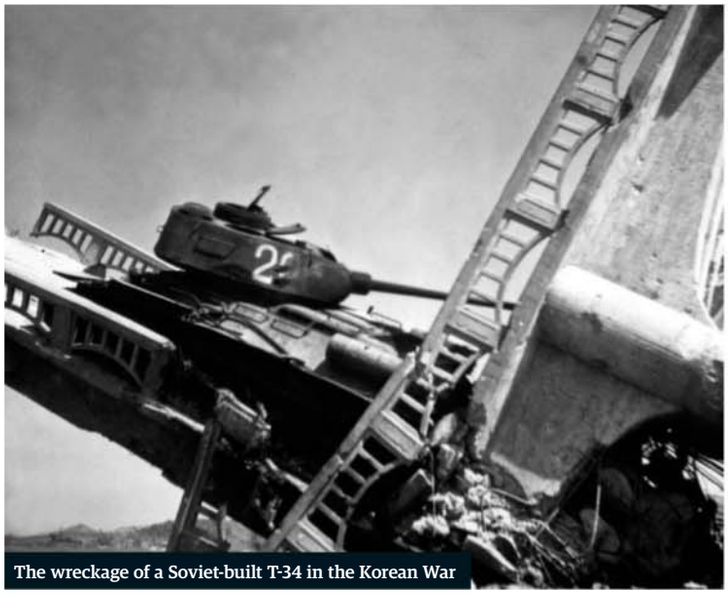
"FROM THE OUTSIDE, THESE TWO 'EVIL EMPIRES' WERE MARCHING IN LOCKSTEP"

The eventual CPC victory and the rise of Mao as leader of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 did lead to full Soviet recognition, albeit four months after the event. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, signed in February 1950, was the subject of much alarm in Washington and braying propaganda from all sides, but this concealed bitter negotiations in which Mao fought off attempts to cede more Chinese territory to the USSR.

"The very room where the talks were held was like a stage where a demonic show was being acted out," recalled Stalin's interpreter NT Fedorenko in 1989. "When Stalin walked in, everyone seemed to stop breathing, to freeze."

From the outside though, these two 'evil empires' were marching in lockstep, and the 1950-1953 Korean War seemed to prove the hawks in the West right as Chinese and Soviet air support sheltered the North Korean war machine. While communist air power held the skies, Chinese ground troops armed with Soviet weapons took to the field. Despite this apparent axis of evil, tensions between the two were growing.

Stalin was eager to avoid any direct confrontation with the US, limiting Soviet involvement (eg wearing Chinese uniforms, flying under North Korean colours and forbidding speaking Russian over the radio) to the air, and insisted on the Soviet fighters operating under their own command rather than one unified hierarchy along with the Chinese and North Koreans.



The wreckage of a Soviet-built T-34 in the Korean War

With no shared codes or communications at a grass-roots level, this resulted in very high friendly fire as North Korean or Chinese ground troops opened fire on Soviet MiGs whose markings they didn't recognise, who in turn shot down Chinese pilots for the same reason. Both powers were also severely overstretched; the poorly armed and under-trained Chinese relied heavily on Soviet equipment, which the USSR was struggling to produce due to the ongoing strain caused by World War II. In order to balance the books, Stalin slapped the Chinese with a bill of around $650 million (approximately £420 million) that crippled the country's economy for decades to come.

While the Korean War crystallised on 27 July 1953 into the stalemate that divides the country to this day, Stalin's ignominious end came earlier that same year. On 5 March the Russian premier died following a stroke and Nikita Khrushchev emerged from the power scrum to a more cordial relationship with Mao. The new Soviet leader quickly pledged technical support for China's attempts to industrialise, along with over 520 million rubles in loans. The two leaders also encouraged Vietnamese communist premier, Ho Chi Minh, to accept the division of Vietnam into red north and capitalist south at the Geneva Conference of 1954.

Mao certainly didn't like Stalin, but as Khrushchev increasingly pulled away from the tyrant's old order, Mao began to see this as an affront – perhaps even threat – to his own regime. Khrushchev's denunciation of the dead leader's cult of personality in 1956 came as Mao was building his own, and Khrushchev's talk of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West clashed with Mao's increasing belligerence and militancy. Then the Soviet leader reneged on a pledge to help the Chinese develop their own nuclear arsenal, even using the USSR's veto to keep China out of the UN.

All things considered, the initial response was fairly restrained, with China criticising Yugoslavia and the Soviets criticising Albania, whose paranoid despot Enver Hoxha had denounced Khrushchev's 'coexistence' with the West in favour of China. As the denunciations moved into the open in 1960 – the year of the Split proper – they became more overt and more cutting.

Despite the widening gulf between the two countries, the US remained largely oblivious with then vice-president Richard Nixon wondering in a 1959 meeting of the US National Security Council whether any talk of a Sino-Soviet spat might in fact be some dastardly plot. The following year

IN AT THE DEEP END...

Recalling his first visit to China in his memoirs, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev observed, 'I saw through their hypocrisy... [W]hen I came back I told my comrades, "Conflict with China is inevitable."'

This view of 1954, however, might have been coloured by a demeaning, later visit in 1958 where the Chinese leader Mao Zedong belittled the Russian from the airport onward, putting him up in a hotel with no air conditioning and flatly refusing Soviet proposals for joint defence initiatives. Mao's personal physician, Li Zhisui, described the Chinese commander as behaving like an emperor, while "treating Khrushchev like a barbarian come to pay tribute."

The next morning came the ultimate indignity for the Russian when Mao forced him into a swimming pool at his luxury compound, Zhongnanhai, knowing full well that the Soviet premier had never properly learnt to swim. As Khrushchev bobbed uncertainly in the shallows, Mao called for flotation aids – described mockingly as a child's 'water wings' by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger – allowing him to join the CPC chairman in the deep end.

'He's a prizewinning swimmer, and I'm a miner,' recalled Khrushchev in his memoirs. 'Between us, I basically flop around when I swim; I'm not very good at it. But he swims around, showing off, all the while expounding his political views... It was Mao's way of putting himself in an advantageous position.'

Coming two years after the Soviet premier's denunciation of Stalin, and two years before what is now recognised as the beginning of the Sino-Soviet Split, this bizarre display was perhaps the most vivid and idiosyncratic single portrait of relations between the two communist nations for over a decade.



Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev in 1936

President Eisenhower agreed with Chiang Kai-shek (who by this point was ruling only the island of Taiwan) that "the communist bloc works as a bloc, pursues a global scheme, and no party to the bloc takes independent action."

Though Khrushchev made headlines in Europe and North America for his table-banging rhetoric and his ghoulish declaration of "We will bury you", the man who started the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis should perhaps also be remembered as the man who ended it. Mao criticised the Soviet leader openly for backing down, and by the time the Soviet leader made his first nuclear threats over Zhenbao/Damansky in 1964, the Chinese premier knew better than to take it seriously.

Only with the rise later that same year of Leonid Brezhnev, who took the Soviet Union to missile parity with the United States and crushed opposition to Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia with force of arms, were the threats backed up. Truck-mounted Scaleboard launchers were placed under the command of the officers on the ground for the first time, and the jingoistic Radio Peace and Progress blared all over the globe in a multitude of languages: "Are we afraid of Mao Zedong and his pawns, who are making a display of might on our border? The whole world knows that the main striking force of the Soviet Armed Forces is its rocket units."

Even after the Sino-Soviet Border War ended, Brezhnev knew better than to take his eye off the region, and by 1971 44 divisions of around 10,000-13,000 men, or 32-40 aircraft each – up from 22 divisions in 1969 – were keeping watch over the vast 4,380-kilometre (2,738-mile) shared border – along with the complex infrastructure required to support them. Soviet troop numbers in neighbouring Mongolia also grew to 100,000, dwarfing the Mongolian People's Republic's own army of around 30,000 soldiers.

Though China and the USSR never waged another open war, they clashed sabres in a multitude of proxy wars across Africa, South East Asia and beyond, through rebel groups and communist regimes. Perhaps more importantly the irreparable collapse of the Sino-Soviet relationship radically changed the global order.

Recognising that he couldn't fight war on two fronts – and judging the threat of land invasion from the USSR far greater than an American attack – Mao chose rapprochement with the old enemy, leading to an unlikely 1972 state visit of US President Richard Nixon to China. Nixon, the man who once asked if Sino-Soviet discord might be a ploy, saw a closer relationship with China as an opportunity to undermine Soviet influence.

Khrushchev died in 1971 without seeing that his talk of 'peaceful coexistence' had come to fruition – but between China and the US, rather than the USSR and the US. Neither did he see the more famous Cold War play out for a further two decades, ending with the Red Army's bloody withdrawal from Afghanistan and, subsequently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union.



The USSR's BM-13 'Grad' rocket artillery in action



Soviet armoured vehicles rolling through Afghanistan in 1986



Chinese soldiers surrender to US Marines during the Korean War

© Zhang Zhenshi, E.Kuvalkin RIA Novosti archive

CHINA'S WAR WITH JAPAN 1937-1945

The longest war of World War II put under the microscope

Author: Rana Mitter **Publisher:** Penguin **Price:** £25



Promising to assert China's case for being the fourth great Allied power in WWII, Rana Mitter – professor of History and Politics of China at Oxford University – doesn't quite deliver on that front, instead invoking that qualifier of Italy's involvement in World War I as 'the least of the great powers'.

However it's clear from Mitter's enlightening overview of the lead-up to the Sino-Japanese War that was soon swallowed up into World War II and the Allies' own struggle with Japan that no other combatant truly compares to China's position from 1931 – when the Japanese first moved into Manchuria – to 1945 when they were eventually defeated by the dawn of the atomic age as the nuclear bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

There's an echo of Operation Barbarossa – the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union – in terms of brutality meted out by invaders and by the defenders, and of the bitter guerrilla war in Yugoslavia in the complex web of occupiers and puppet regimes, and of competing nationalist and communist resistance, but China truly does stand alone. This is fitting, considering the reluctance of the US, the USSR and Britain to directly involve themselves until Pearl Harbor forced their hand.

We move from a Japanese perspective to cover events from the base of future leader Mao Zedong in his Chinese Communist Party heartland and micro-nation, to the crumbling regime of nationalist Kuomintang generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the ill-fated Vichy state of the idealistic collaborator Wang Jingwei. We also learn of the three Chinese leaders' shared origins in Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement against the moribund Chinese emperor, and the birth of the Republic of China in 1911. All subjects Western readers might be unfamiliar with, especially as European history emphasises battles fought closer to home, and even Pacific actors like Australia and the US put more weight on wherever their own boots landed, meaning that, while China was at the geographical heart of Japan's expansion across Asia, its role has often been bypassed in popular perception.

Mitter has an eye for the fascinating, bringing in diaries and eyewitness testimonies that unearth some of the motivations behind the many stories unfolding under the banner of *China's War With Japan*. However, the sheer breadth of territory – literally and figuratively – covered can't help but be unsatisfying as we're shown windows into stories we long to spend more time with and see developed more fully.

Over the deftly structured narrative we move from comparing Mao's model communist dictatorship to the ineffective welfare reforms of Chiang's less certain government, and the secret police tactics of the three regimes. Throw in the increasingly bitter and counterproductive relationship between Chiang and US General 'Vinegar Joe' Stilwell who was parachuted in to take command of the nationalist armies, waging peripheral wars in Burma and even taking nationalist troops to British-controlled India, leaving the Kuomintang open to a brutal Japanese advance, and it quickly becomes clear that each subject is ripe for its own volume.

It's to Mitter's credit that *China's War With Japan* is so cohesive, even managing to draw the line between wartime history and nearer history, but this feels like an underdeveloped afterthought, leaving you with a sense that, even 388 pages later, you've only read one long, if very gripping, preface.

Verdict ★★★☆☆



If you like this try...
Bloodlands Timothy Snyder
A haunting look at the human cost of another area that saw a lot of bloodshed in WWII – across Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.

"While China was at the heart of Japan's expansion across Asia, its role has often been bypassed in popular perception"



TOP FIVE OVERLOOKED FRONTS

A few titles that focus on often-forgotten conflicts

THE PATH OF INFINITE SORROW



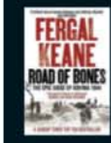
Authors: Craig Collie & Hajime Marutani
With the professional Australian army fighting in northern Africa, conscript militia were forced into the mountains of New Guinea to turn back the Japanese advance.

BETWEEN GIANTS



Author: Prit Buttar
A harrowing tale of the Baltic states – ie Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – that were brutally occupied by first the Nazis and later by Soviet forces during the WWII power struggle.

ROAD OF BONES



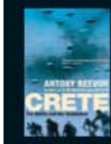
Author: Fergal Keane
A small British and Indian force holds out against a larger Japanese army, keeping British rule in India safe – only for it to collapse under its own weight just a few years later.

WAR OF THE WHITE DEATH



Author: Bair Irincheev
A fiercely fought guerrilla war against the much larger Soviet Union makes democratic Finland an unlikely ally of Nazi Germany in the Winter War that played out in 1939-40.

CRETE: THE BATTLE AND THE RESISTANCE

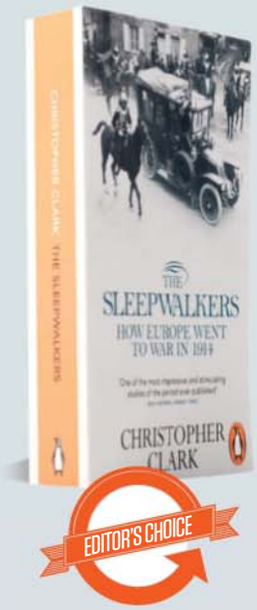


Author: Antony Beevor
The author of the bestselling book *Stalingrad* returns to explore the invasion of Greece's largest island – Crete – which surprisingly was very nearly the first Nazi defeat of the war.

THE SLEEPWALKERS

Shining a light through the fog of war

Author: Christopher Clark **Publisher:** Penguin **Price:** £10.99





While much has been made of Christopher Clark – Modern History professor at Cambridge and author of *Iron Kingdom: The Rise And Downfall Of Prussia* – placing the Balkans, and in particular Serbian nationalism, back at the heart of the buildup to the Great War, more should be made of the consensus challenging he does on all counts.

With a lightness of touch Clark gently questions accepted facts on a variety of fronts. From the long-held victimhood of Serbia, the unwieldiness and natural collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, and the nobility of western European foreign policy, he leaps gallantly to the defence of smaller nations against the rampaging pan-Germanic alliance of sinister men in pointy helmets, and even reassesses the supposed 'inevitability' of the entire conflict. All of the commonly held and heavily mythologised assumptions about who fought who and why are held up to scrutiny.

He doesn't splay his hand like a cocksure cardsharp telling you you've lost – a common vice with historians who have an angle to impart as much as a fact. Instead Clark's meticulous research through diplomatic papers, letters and interviews lets him tease out the facts, leading the reader to conclusions instead of making them for you. It's one of the benefits of real understanding, and it could easily fail if the author's skills as a writer were not equal to his skills as a historian.

As we approach the centenary of that black day in Sarajevo when Archduke Ferdinand took a bullet, and 9 million men and women were condemned to death for it, a reassessment of events is key to understanding the shape of the modern world – a point Clark makes in the book's introduction: 'The presumption stealthily asserted itself that if the actors' hats had gaudy green ostrich feathers on them, then their thoughts and motivations probably did too.' From terrorist cells and suicide bombers, to arms deals and acts of parliament – the world of *The Sleepwalkers* isn't all so dissimilar to the one we live in today.

Verdict ★★★★★



If you like this try...
Iron Curtain **Anne Applebaum**
Gulag author Applebaum demystifies the rise of the Soviet Bloc and highlights the many cracks in the Warsaw Pact.

POSTERS OF THE GREAT WAR

The art of manipulation explored in technicolour

Authors: Frédérick Hadley & Martin Pegler **Publisher:** Pen & Sword **Price:** £19.99



Compiled by military historian Martin Pegler and curator of the Historial de la Grande Guerre, Frédérick Hadley, it's the latter's familiarity with the vast archives of the French museum that really comes to the fore in this slim yet busy volume. Containing over 200 hand-picked posters from World War I and its immediate aftermath, *Posters Of The Great War* explores key themes – from bombastic peons to duty and history in recruiting posters to the crude demonisation of the enemy. It also shows how the art form evolved from simplistic text-heavy notices to stylised works of art drawing on myth and symbolism, and what these developments tell us about the direction of the war. Indeed, it explains why posters were even needed in the first place as the age of the small professional army fighting in far-away colonies was replaced by the massed collision of industrialised European nations.

Given the source, it's perhaps to be expected that *Posters Of The Great War* draws so heavily from the Western Front – and largely from French, British and American posters, with German material coming second and Austrian a poor third, and the other nations dribbling in with single figure contributions, however it's somewhat disappointing. With such radically different and fascinatingly rich cultural, political and religious concoctions coming to the boil in the increasingly beleaguered and unstable Russia, as well as the growing nationalist aspirations in Slavic frontiers of the crumbling Austro-Hungarian Empire, there's a fantastic book waiting to be written that draws insight from the other half of the war.

Those weary of seeing Kitchener's looming moustache and Augustus Savile Lumley's pensive father wondering how he can possibly admit to his children that he didn't see out 1914-18 watching his friends choke on mustard gas will find little to inspire interest here. But as a skimmable primer for artists and students, or an introduction for the curious, *Posters Of The Great War* is a cornucopia of alluring imagery that ranges from Britain's pastoral, postcard realism to France's luxurious absinthe Art Nouveau that prove graphic design – much like engineering and medicine – really do flourish in times of conflict.



Verdict ★★★☆☆



If you like this try...
Posters Of The Cold War **David Crowley**
More art book than history tome, this beast published by the V&A Museum is the ultimate work of retro eye-candy.

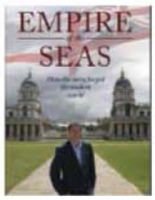


Britannia rules, and rues, the waves...

EMPIRE OF THE SEAS

Available on: DVD, tie-in book

Take a trip into the Royal Navy's past with Dan Snow



Watching this, it's swiftly obvious why Dan Snow seems to have become the BBC's documentarian of choice. Frequently teaming up with his father, Peter – for the likes of *Battlefield Britain* – Snow Junior is a fact-delivering dynamo and *Empire Of The Seas: How The Navy Forged The Modern World* was just one of the shows he ploughed through in 2010 with his effortless charm and rugby-team keenness.

This four-part series ostensibly tackles the birth and growth of the British Navy from its genesis in the 17th century with glorious national hero/greedy slave-trading pirate Sir Francis Drake, to the 'gunboat diplomacy' of the 18th and 19th centuries, to the brutal maritime charnel houses of World War I and II. But in truth its remit is so much larger and the events that Snow strides through steadily begin to underpin the wider narrative – the development of the British Empire and its legacy.

Snow frequently gets a bit of drubbing for his apparent patriotism – and admittedly *Empire Of The Seas* is the latest in a long line of shows where he hangs out with British servicemen – but his real homeland is history and he doesn't sugarcoat the venal or shameful episodes in Britain's seafaring past. Scooping up historical documents like they're crisps, bounding across landscapes and jumping into boats at the slightest provocation, you could even forgive the abundance of cliché and hyperbole so sincere is Dan Snow in his enthusiasm for a damn good story.

Verdict ★★★★☆



If you like this try...

The Last Explorers

Windswept wild man who hails from BBC Scotland Neil Oliver follows in the footsteps of David Livingstone and other pioneers.

Natural history gets the blockbuster treatment

RISE OF THE CONTINENTS

Available on: DVD



Someone clearly told Professor Iain Stewart that if he was going to do a four-part BBC Two series about rocks, then he'd better make it exciting otherwise there will be no location shoots and it will be off to BBC Four with him!

Subsequently, Stewart jumps into pools of water at least once per episode, stays up for seven hours to catch a duck-billed platypus, and uses ever-so risible Harry Potter-style sequences to examine the chemical structure of coal in a colourful nebula of light. He also zooms back through the millennia to witness the massive supercontinent Pangaea breaking apart with all the overblown, CG-laden bombast of Harry destroying one of Voldemort's Horcruxes.

Stewart is an affable and engaging host though, throwing every tool in the documentary maker's arsenal at the viewer, drawing the links between precious stones, evolution and the contemporary evidence still dotting landscapes – from volcanoes and hot springs to the great swirl of water around Antarctica – and the events that led to the formation of our continents 200 million years ago. There are a lot of post-*Wonders Of The Universe* musical swells too, but without Professor Brian Cox's 'D:Reamy' dulcet delivery it's less like something you'd find projected in a chill-out yurt at Glastonbury, and rather more captivating and edifying.



Professor Iain Stewart makes geology rock 'n' roll

It's easy to mock such full-throttle attempts to the less obviously thrilling disciplines of science or history, but it's not an easy task and *Rise Of The Continents* spares no expense. Ultimately though, it's Stewart's infectious enthusiasm more than the daft visual tricks that sell just how fascinating this story is.

Verdict ★★★☆☆



If you like this try...

David Attenborough's First Life

This man needs no introductions and, in this series, the world-famous naturalist is looking at the earliest origins of animal life on Earth.

HISTORICAL APPS

Educational content for when you're on the go

GREAT BATTLES MEDIEVAL



Android: OS 3.0 | Free
iPhone+: iOS 6.0 | £2.99/$4.99

Tool up for the Hundred Years' War with this spectacular strategy RPG put together by the History Channel. It strikes the perfect balance between historically accurate detail and classic gameplay.

BACK IN TIME



iPhone+: iOS 4.3 | £5.49/$7.99

An award-winning and critically acclaimed history textbook that takes kids of all ages from the Big Bang through to the present with a mix of music, animation, text and wonder.

WARPLANES: A HISTORY OF AERIAL COMBAT



iPhone+: iOS 3.2 | £4.99/$6.99

Explore 43 of history's most incredible warplanes with interactive 3D models, photography, cutaways and cross-sections. Stat screens even let you compare planes side-by-side for the grown-up Top Trumps experience

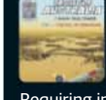
LONDON – A CITY THROUGH TIME



iPhone+: iOS 5.0 | £9.99/$13.99

An innovative and interactive biography, London – A City Through Time distils 2,000 years of bricks and mortar into fascinating articles, timelines and 360-degree panoramas. Perfect for locals and tourists.

HISTORY COMICS



Android: 2.2 | Free
iPhone+: iOS 4.3 | Free

Requiring in-app purchases each issue, this eComic focuses on key moments in modern Australian history with the first three issues covering Kokoda, Gallipoli and the Pacific Theatre. Fun and fascinating, it's proved a hit with schools Down Under.

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Old correspondence can hold a wealth of historical info and fascinating stories

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Amazing stories
Interesting or insightful tales passed down from your ancestors

Eyewitness accounts
Did you or a relative witness a major event in person? Share it today

Family trees
A chance to turn the spotlight on your ancestors and the lives they led



AMAZING STORIES

"I was trapped and unable to make my way to the door... due to the flames"

Read about the tragic tale of a World War II bombing raid from which one reader's great uncle never returned



April Madden shares a first-hand account of a WWII bombing raid in 1944 that came under enemy fire. Tragically, her Great Uncle Freddie was the only man on board not to make it home...

My grandmother adored her older brother Freddie, who was a rear gunner on a Lancaster bomber in WWII. We knew that he went missing, presumed dead, on a raid over Hamburg in July 1944, aged just 20, but for decades the family didn't have any more information than that. One of his friends had tried to contact my great-grandparents shortly afterwards, but their house had been bombed during the Blitz and he couldn't find them.

50 years later, Freddie's friend managed to trace my grandmother and explain what had happened. After my grandmother died her family archive passed to me. The following is taken from a letter from one of my great uncle's comrades that I found among my grandmother's belongings.

'I first met Freddie in September 1943 at Silverstone – of course, now a famous racing circuit. They had just about finished the OUT course on Wellingtons and were looking for a second AG [air gunner]; they recruited me. We went on through training, completed 16 operational flights with 61 Squadron, and were then either volunteered for Pathfinder Force by our pilot, Keith Perry, or conscripted by the Pathfinder Force scout. I always think we were volunteered, although Keith prefers the latter

Send your memories to: @ allabouthistory@imagine-publishing.co.uk



Frederick Shane trained in a Wellington bomber like these before becoming a rear gunner in a Lancaster as part of 61 Squadron



As well as aeroplanes Freddie also worked with other aircraft like helicopters



Frederick Shane – April's Great Uncle Freddie – is sitting in the second row, third from the right

explanation. We arrived at RAF Oakington and 7 squadron in April 1944 and were on our 39th operation on that fateful night.

The target was Hamburg and, although we were by then quite senior [in] the squadron and qualified target markers, on that night we were acting as a supporter. This means we were flying in with the target markers but were there to assist them by dropping a type of silver paper to swamp the defence by weight of numbers. We took off at 10.45pm loaded with six [907kg] 2,000lb bombs.

The outward flight was uneventful and the defences seemed light over Hamburg. We bombed and turned for home. I began to feel very uneasy shortly afterwards. There seemed to be something eerie about everything as it went terribly quiet. I suspected fighters were around and, shortly afterwards, bombers started to go down although we ourselves were not attacked. On approaching the enemy coast we ran into very heavy fire which I suspect came from coastal AA batteries. We received three direct hits and the aircraft immediately burst into flame.

The pilot had no alternative but to order "Abandon aircraft". I was trapped and unable to make my way to the door to the rear due to the flames and the steep angle of the aircraft which was nose-diving rapidly. I could only lie on the floor to escape the heat, and pray.

I became aware after a while that the pilot was regaining control and the steep dive had extinguished most of the flames. I went forward to find the crew at the front of the aircraft were still on board, having been thrown onto the escape hatch by the rapid descent. We managed to put out the remainder of the fire, but were in a sorry state. We had lost both starboard engines, and the communication equipment had gone together with all navigational equipment. I was instructed by the pilot to make a check of the rest of the crew.

I found the bomb aimer and the wireless operator badly burned, sadly. On going to the rear turret I found it empty. I feel sure you have realised that a rear gunner's parachute was very accessible and, having clipped it on, it was an easy matter to turn the turret to one side, open the doors and fall out backwards. This is without doubt what Freddie did. We limped back across the North Sea, not knowing really where, when or even if we would make landfall as we were navigating by the North Star. Eventually we crossed the English coast and, after firing red distress signals, were invited to land at an American airfield at Bungay, Suffolk. We had to crash-land as we had no flaps or undercarriage, but no further injuries were sustained.

We all feel that poor Freddie came down in the coastal area and perished in the sea. It is so sad that, after all his bravery over such a long operational period, he had to die like this. It could have so easily gone the other way and he might well have been the only survivor and the rest of us could have perished in a terrible crash. You may rest assured he died a very brave man indeed.'

Do you have a military history in your family?

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YOUR PHOTOS

Eyewitness to mass destruction



Steve Jenkins

My granddad, George Henry Gwyn Way, signed up to join the Royal Navy in 1937 to escape working down the mines, and see the world. His first commission was aboard the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle to China. This was at the same time as the Japan-China war. This made up the basis of many of his stories including gruesome public executions and prisoner mistreatment.

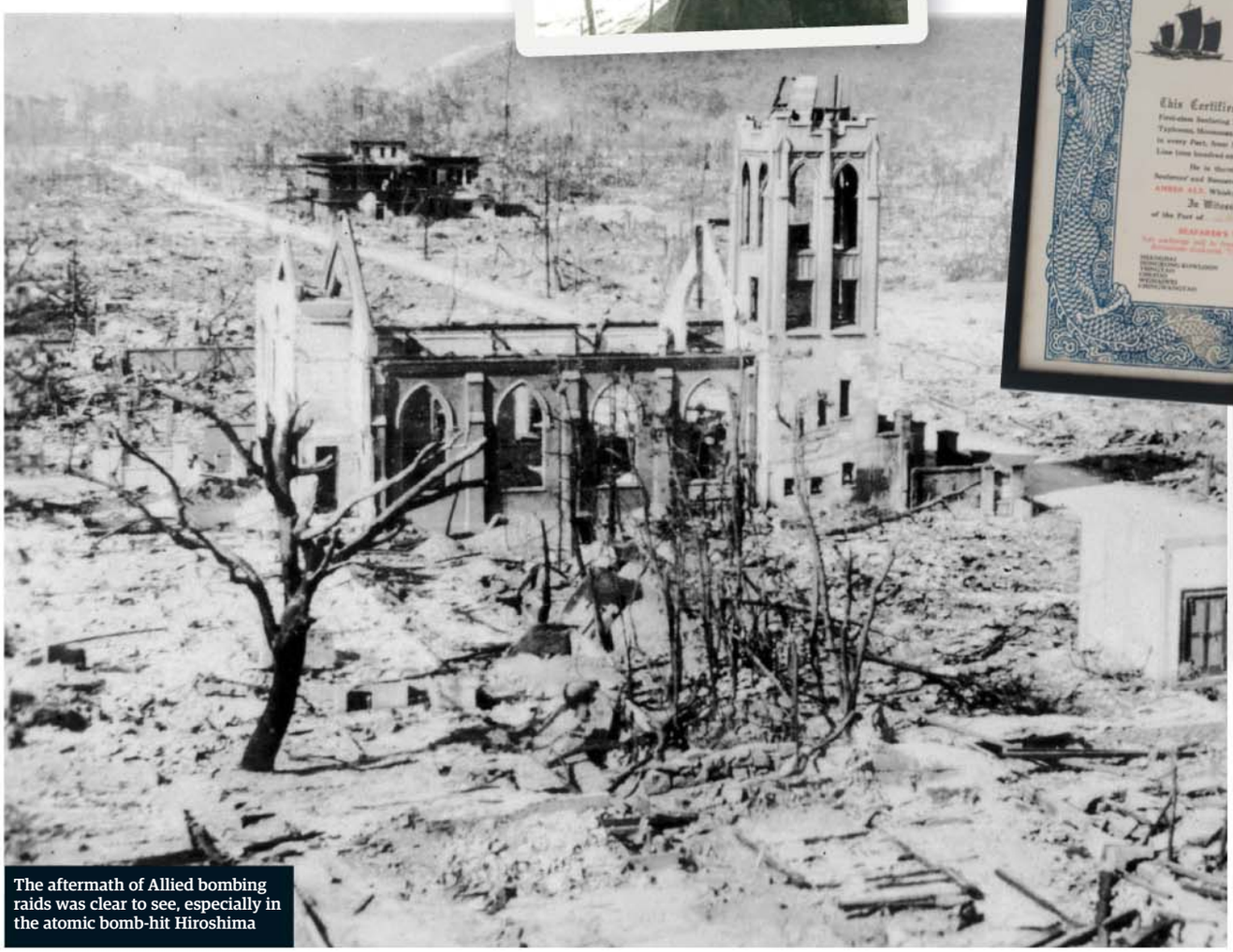
He spent most of his 12 years out in the East sailing the China seas. But he also spent time on the minesweeper HMS Bangor and was involved in Operation Jubilee at Dieppe. At the end of the war he moved on to the submarine HMS Auriga, helping to test sonar, before coming home in 1949.





Christmas Day 1937 on HMS Eagle was spent out East, but they still enjoyed roast turkey!



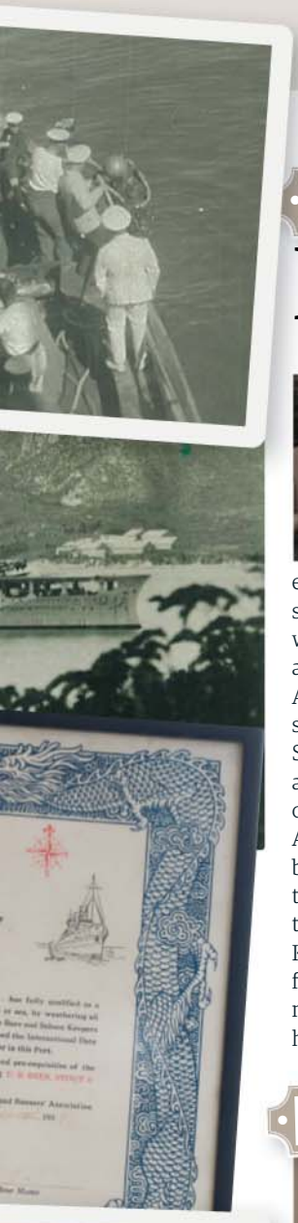


The aftermath of Allied bombing raids was clear to see, especially in the atomic bomb-hit Hiroshima





Send your memories to: @ allabouthistory@imagine-publishing.co.uk



ANTIQUES & OBJECTS

Diving into history



Tony Millward

With my dad having worked on submarines in the Navy, I've always had a passion for all things maritime and started diving in the early-Nineties. While the novelty of seeing fish and other sealife quickly wore off, I decided to give wreck diving a try and haven't looked back since. All of the objects you see here were salvaged from one particular ship: the SS Kyarra, which was torpedoed by a German U-boat off the south coast of England in May 1918. Bound for Australia, the luxury liner was carrying both passengers and thousands of tons of cargo when she sunk. As just this small selection demonstrates, the Kyarra's freight was diverse, ranging from cosmetics like French perfume, medical items like false teeth through to high-end goods like gold pocketwatches.



A few pieces of cargo Tony has salvaged from the Kyarra wreck including pipes, fountain pens, magazines and perfume

In the UK, shipwreck divers are subject to a host of laws, so make sure you gen up before recovering any items: **www.gov.uk/wreck-and-salvage-law**





LETTERS FROM THE PAST

A look behind enemy lines...



Rhian Carter

My grandmother left school in 1933 and joined the Post Office in Corporation Street, Birmingham, as a counter clerk. During this time, she started writing to some penpals: one based in Japan and Wolfgang Hill in Germany. Over a period of six years, between October 1933 and May 1939, Wolfgang and Hilda wrote to each other over 30 times.

The letters share a young man's journey through hope, indoctrination and into war. Written at a time when Germany was in turmoil, Wolfgang is totally captivated by the promises of Hitler, and the letters document the rise of the Third Reich. They capture the hope that Hitler gave the people of Germany: the promise of a sound economy, the belief in their ability to be a strong nation and pride in becoming an industrial success. From Hitler Youth to SS soldier, the letters track Wolfgang from a pre-war innocence and boyish pride to unquestioning obedience and the harsh realities of World War II.

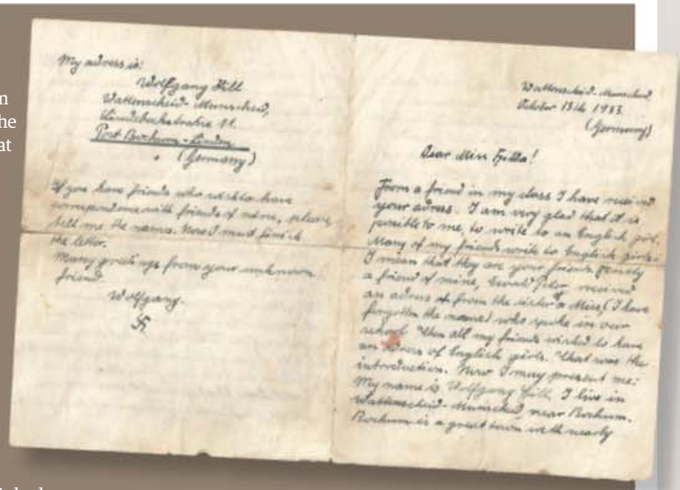
Meanwhile, my grandmother is making jam, knitting pullovers for Wolfgang as gifts and even goes to Germany to visit him in 1939. Wolfgang says that he finds her very pretty, but that German girls are best of all ('Heil Hitler').

My sister Siân collated and used these letters in a school project and it was only then that we became aware of their historical interest. We wrote to the Imperial War Museum, who wrote back to say that they would like them to be part of their archive.

We didn't find these letters until many years later, stuffed under my gran's bed in a battered old RAF suitcase. Siân was able to interview our grandmother as part of her research for her History GCSE project. Siân learnt that she was enrolled into the RAF and posted to Bletchley Park as a teleprinter operator.

She had never told anyone what her work involved and made no exceptions for her granddaughter. My granddad was in the army, posted to a base near Bletchley and they chatted - quite illegally - over the teleprinter. In fact, he proposed to my grandmother over the teleprinter and they married in 1945.

In 1948 there is another letter from Wolfgang Hill. He is alive and well after the war and they continue to write until at least 1955. And there the trail goes cold... My gran died ten years ago and she often wondered what happened to Wolfgang Hill after 1955.



Have you ever found a dusty letter with a story to tell?

/AllAboutHistory @AboutHistoryMag

HISTORY VS HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen...

GLADIATOR

Director: Ridley Scott **Starring:** Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Oliver Reed, Derek Jacobi, Connie Nielsen
Country of origin: USA, UK **Year made:** 2000

Father to a murdered son, husband to a murdered wife - and little adherence to historical accuracy...

WHAT THEY GOT WRONG...



01 The opening scene shows the Romans fighting Germanic tribes in a forest made up of a single type of tree. Managed forests of this kind were not introduced until the 1500s. Plus catapults and ballistae wouldn't have been used in a wooded environment like this - they were siege weapons.



02 Most Roman buildings would not have been white and certainly wouldn't have looked as ancient and weather-beaten as they do in the movie. In fact, many would have been new and freshly painted in a variety of colours, as would the statues and carvings that appear in the buildings and streets.



03 Rome wasn't founded as a republic. In fact, the Eternal City started life as a monarchical state ruled by the Alban kings, before becoming a republic in 509 BCE and an empire in 27 BCE. Emperor Marcus Aurelius never intended to return it to a republican state as that would have weakened it.



04 Even under the most tyrannical of imperial machinations Maximus couldn't have simply disappeared to be exiled and enslaved. His banishment would have been legally recorded and as a result his master, Proximus, wouldn't have been able to take him to Rome to compete in the Colosseum.



05 Emperor Marcus Aurelius wasn't murdered by his son Commodus. He actually died in Vindobona (modern-day Vienna). He didn't ban gladiatorial combat either.

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History in the making

70TH ANNIVERSARY DAMBUSTERS 617 Sqn

A50138 1:72 Scale
Dambusters Gift Set
This aircraft was flown by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, Commanding Officer No.617 Squadron. Gibson led three Lancasters to attack and breach the Eder Dam.

A01731 1:72 Scale
WWI Royal Horse Artillery
Trying to make the army more mobile during the Great War the Royal Horse Artillery in this set have two field guns, a full team of horses, gun limber and full crew.

A50142 1:76 Scale
King Tiger / Cromwell MkIV
Both the Cromwell and Tiger II tanks made their combat debuts in the Normandy campaign, however both were very different types of tank, the Cromwell being a manoeuvrable and fast medium cruiser tank, the Tiger II being a hugely complex heavy tank, weighing in at 68 tonnes.

A50104 1:700 Scale
RMS Titanic Gift Set
RMS Titanic was an Olympic-class passenger liner owner by the White Star Line and built at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast, Northern Ireland. On the night of 14th April 1912, during her maiden voyage, Titanic hit an iceberg, and sank two hours and forty minutes later, early on 15 April 1912, with the loss of 1,517 lives. At the time of her launching in 1912, she was the largest passenger steamship in the world.



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